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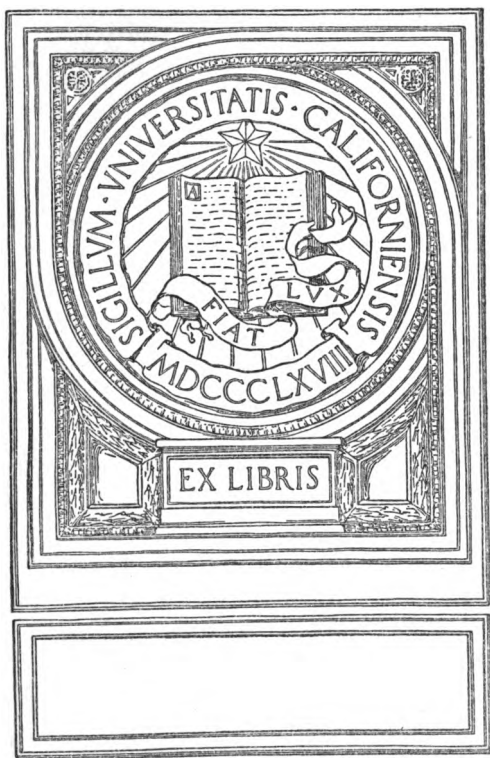
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THIS IS RUSSIA

by
FLIGHT-LIEUTENANT
HUBERT GRIFFITH
II



THIS IS
RUSSIA

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DEDICATED TO
AIR VICE-MARSHAL RONALD GRAHAM,
MY FIRST "CHAIRMAN,"
WITH THANKS

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PREFACE

"We held on when holding on was impossible. We shall not fail in victory now that victory can be achieved."

ILYA EHRENBURG

Some time ago it occurred to high Air Force authorities to stimulate the growing interest in Discussion Groups, Current Affairs debates and so forth, on Air Force Stations, by inviting certain serving officers with specialised knowledge to go round to small and large stations up and down the country lecturing—or, more informally, "talking"—on their own line of interest.

I—having travelled in Soviet Russia widely in the peacetime years, having written several books about certain aspects of the Soviet experiment, and having had the profound and exhilarating experience of getting first-hand knowledge of Russia's war-effort with the R.A.F. Fighter Wing at Murmansk in 1941—was given the chance of lecturing to my own Service on "Russia at War."

The extended trip, called lecture tour, started off in what I can only regard as a peculiarly R.A.F. manner—with an evening talk in the anteroom of the Mess of one of the great Operational Commands; Air Vice Marshals were present, and W.A.A.F. officers, and officers' wives; and the Sergeants' Mess had been asked to send a contingent. I may be wrong, but it seemed to me that this combination of the businesslike and the informal was characteristic of a Service that has not lagged behind the others in achievement.

One question had been settled beforehand—and again in a manner which I believe to be profoundly characteristic of my own Service. I had mentioned, in discussing the line my

talks might take, that if I were to be sent round to countless hundreds of airmen talking on so broad a subject as "Russia," or "Russia at War"—and, moreover, if "questions" and discussion were, as I understood, to be part of the recognised and encouraged entertainment—then the spectre of "politics" might be expected at one time or another to rear its ugly head.

To this I had at least half expected the answer from High Authority: "My boy, keep off politics like the plague! Tell 'em what the Wing did in Russia—but remember that politics are not the business of *any* Service lecturer." On the contrary, High Authority answered very much as follows: "We recognise precisely the point you put. We recognise that it would be (a) impossible, (b) fruitless, to go round lecturing on Russia at War—and inviting questions and discussion—if the political issue has to be completely shirked. You've got to tell our own boys what the Russian boys think they're fighting for, haven't you? Well, keep it in reason, of course, but—go ahead."

The result of this decision (which I can only salute as profoundly imaginative and intelligent) has been helpful beyond words. In the first place, it eased all doubts and difficulties on the part of myself as a lecturer. I have been able to say the deepest and truest things that I know about the modern Russian effort—compressed into the space of medium-length talks—without the eternally cramping thought at the back of my mind "Is this verging on political or debatable grounds?" (For almost anything that makes sense about modern Russia must tread somewhere near "political"—and certainly "debatable"—grounds.)

It has led, on the other side, to a spate of questions that I can only regard as evidence of the high standard of intelligence and "awareness" on the part of our modern young Air Force. Airmen have *not* been given the impression that they must confine themselves to such comparatively in-

nocuous questions as "what the Russians wore," "what we were given to eat in Soviet Russia," and to purely Service queries. On the contrary, in large Air Force audiences, consisting of many hundred airmen (with Air Commodores and Group Captains frequently presiding—and leading and egging on discussions) questions have continually swept the discussion up to such general considerations as Politics, Religion and Sex—the subjects, as Bernard Shaw once said, that intelligent human beings most readily discuss; the place of family life in modern Russia; the "profit-motive" (does it, or does it not, still exist?—and if not, what is the substitute for it?); future Russian and Polish relations, future Russian-Finnish relations, future Soviet world-relations, the future domination (possible or improbable?) of world-socialism . . . and so on and so forth—in short, the *sort* of discussion that shows that the rising young generation of the Royal Air Force is almost startlingly alive to countless present and future world-problems.

I have spoken my piece. I have given a sketch, as I see it, of what have been Russia's problems for the last twenty-five years; and of the state of decay into which the vast Russian Empire had fallen in the last years of the rule of the Tsars (essential for the understanding of modern Russia); and have appended a postscript on what I considered a lapse of our high standard of British editorship in the way in which many of our more important newspapers had handled Russian news for the twenty-five years before July, 1941.

I have given an idea of what I have seen with my own eyes of the passionate intensity with which modern Russia is taking the present war.

And I have met the most "rewarding" audiences that I ever hope to meet, from my fellow-citizens (for we are all to a certain important extent still amateurs in our temporary military occupation)—my fellow-personnel of the Royal Air Force.

A boy gets up in question-time at the end of a talk : " Sir, you say the profit-motive has been washed out in modern Russia. But what's left over, then, to act as an incentive? What, if anything, have they found to put in its place? (Lecturer's mental note : " Boy, you've used your brain in framing that one ! You may have read a book or two about Russia—or you may not have read a line—but you've evidently done a certain amount of basic thinking. The question is an absolutely fair one; and deserves the best and fairest answer than can be given to it.")

Question : " *What about Religion in modern Russia?* "

Question : " *Can you get divorced in modern Russia by going round to the nearest Registry Office?* (Tremendous pricking-up of ears by the married section of the audience.)

Question : " *How is it that the Russians are able to convert their tractor-factories to tank-factories so easily? Is it partly because no-one's got to get a rake-off before they can start in with the stuff? Is it because they've got no patentee rights, etc., to start buying out?* (Mental reservation of the lecturer : " Boy, you have been reading something or other . . . ")

Questions on how far family life has broken up, or has returned to normal, in modern Russia; on education; on the part played by Russian women in the war (" *Have the Russians got women Fighter-pilots?* "); on art and culture in wartime, if still existing; on ultimate Russian war-aims; on the higher organisation of the Russian armed forces (which last question I have frankly admitted myself unable to answer, having no more knowledge of it than anyone else in the room); on the prospect of Russia's gradual and gentle return to capitalism—a theory as widely held as it is palpably false; on the contrasting showings of the Russian armies (as reported) in the Russian-Finnish war, and their demonstrated brilliance in the Russian-German war . . . and on a score of other matters.

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The only genuinely "heckling" question that I have ever had, coming from the back of the hall, in a funereal Scots voice, heavy with pre-determined conviction :—"Tell me what you know of the life of the modern Russian peasant. I think he's a *SERF*!" I tried to say, in as few words as possible, what collective farming had set out to do for the Russian peasant, and what, on the evidence of my own eyes, it had at least partly succeeded in doing. The questioner waited patiently or impatiently for the end of my reply, then sat down, after barking : "Well—I still say he's a *SERF*!" . . . Cheers and counter-cheers !

Two stories relevant to this short passage-of-arms now occur to me, though I was not quick-witted enough to think of them at the time. One is a Russian (and quite lunatic) classic joke—of a certain curate in a certain Russian village—time, evidently the dateless antiquity of the centuries—who bet a parishioner of his that he, the curate, could eat a dozen hard-boiled eggs in a dozen mouthfuls and not die of it. The bet was taken ; the curate came to the fulfilling of his boast : he swallowed the eggs and died of it—and on his tombstone were engraved the words, "He died—but he died still unconvinced !" („УМЕР—НО НЕ УБИДИЛСЯ"). It would be as well for future Anglo-Soviet relations if it could be accepted by us that Russians, Soviet or otherwise, have a wild and crazy sense of humour that is not very far off our own—occasionally wild and crazy—sense of humour. It is not altogether unimportant that the Russians are, and have always been, avid readers of the *Pickwick Papers*, which is often, with all its gorgeous humanity, as near to light-hearted lunacy as makes no difference. The Germans, and many other Continental nations, have never had the faintest idea of what Dickens meant. And a variant of the egg-eating story, with muffins substituted for eggs, occurs in *Pickwick*—on the lips of our own Sam Weller.

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Another story, or, at least, recollection :—of myself, about twelve years ago, wandering round a small collective farm in the Moscow district, in company with a prosperous American-Russian visitor who, years before, had been a member of a poor farming family in the same district. The particular “collective farm” had by no means been wished on us by the Russian authorities as evidence of their success. It had been a bad farming-year generally, especially bad in the Moscow district. Drought, and wire-worm (or its Russian equivalent) had got into the crops. Much that we saw in being taken round the place was seedy-looking and off-colour, and with an air of waiting-for-better-times about it, common to all farming establishments in all countries where farming for the season has been bad. But even here, in that unpropitious year, there were schools in action, and crèches in action, and baths in action—and the children of the place were certainly not ill-fed and not unhappy, but plump and laughing—and a big block of modern-designed houses was being added to by another.

I asked my American companion how this compared with the villages of the same district that he remembered from his youth. He replied in a single sentence that impressed me. He said, “In the old days the children of the peasants hereabouts used to struggle on the floor of the dwelling-house to get their food out of the same trough as the hogs, and a baby would sometimes be badly savaged by a hog.”

Graphic recollection !—and easily checked up and confirmed by the records of the times. But I missed the chance to go into all this with my heckler, with his contention that modern Russian policy had reduced the free Russian peasantry (free since 1861) to their former status as serfs.

Last and best question of all, again coming from the back of a hall, and again from the lips of some junior “other rank” :—“*What is the best thing, if anything, that*

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you think we can learn from the Russians?; what is the best thing, if anything, that you think the Russians can learn from us?"

This pair of questions, with their glimpse of balanced sanity and wide-embracing enquiry, coming from a junior airman, would alone have made the toils and travels of a long lecture-tour worth while. (Not to be sententious, I would have enjoyed it anyhow: the chance of visiting half a hundred R.A.F. stations up and down England, often being flown from point to point in various types of aircraft; meeting old friends; and watching with deep admiration the R.A.F. getting on with its various aspects of the job, was a continual joy and privilege.)

In truth, the questions and discussions provoked have verged on the "political," in the sense that very many hundreds of serving airmen have seemed genuinely anxious to get to know a great Allied Nation—the ideas on which a great Allied Nation is conducting its life and its war, and the practical outcome, up to date, of those ideas.

Nearly always, so far as operational duties allowed, Group Captains commanding stations have paid the lecturer the compliment of turning up to lectures—and the still higher compliment of staying on to start or to take their part in questions and discussions. I do not record this out of vainglory, but because—Station Commanders being responsible and busy men—it is proof of the fact that the policy of "educating" the troops—in a better phrase, "encouraging the intellectual curiosity of the troops"—is enthusiastically believed in by senior R.A.F. commanders.

Never at any time has there been a hint that what I have said had better have been said in the privacy of officers' messes, and that for general Service purposes there should be a limit to the range of what airmen were encouraged to talk about.

On the contrary. A certain Station Commander took the

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opportunity to get up and to remark, at the end of a lecture to air-crews in a briefing-room :—"Well, chaps, I hope what you've listened to about the way the Russians are getting on with the job may help even you air-crews to pull out one further degree of effort." He was a pilot with a brilliant operational record himself, one of the stars of the modern Air Force. The lecture, with the ensuing questions, had gone on (on a dud and non-operational morning) from 10 o'clock almost to 12.30. Halfway through, I had asked him, in an aside, if he did not think the proceedings were going on too long. He had said, with a glance out of the window at the skies, "Not a bit. Dud morning outside! All the boys much interested, and shooting off their mouths like anything. I only wish we had more lectures like this to lay on for non-flying days." (Any lecturer in the world might wish that he had more audiences like those young operational Bomber air-crews. . . .)

Another Station Commander, after presiding at one afternoon lecture, immediately arranged to drive me out to one of his satellite aerodromes the same evening, where he again presided and summed up the discourse; and again the next morning to yet another of his satellites, where he again did the same office.

As this particular experiment in the dissemination of ideas—"the making of one part of a world conscious of another part of the same world"—is the work of a particular Service, I wish to render thanks to that Service.

* * *

The questions, asked by an above-the-average "alive" and intelligent section of the community, may be of interest to many other "alive" and above-the-average intelligent sections of the community. Hence Chapter III of the present short book.

Many of the questions, particularly those relating to

religion and to future Soviet world-relations, have cropped up again and again—I would say quite invariably, whenever the circumstances of the moment have allowed “question-time” to get into its stride. (A point of interest:—The young W.A.A.F. personnel, who, of course, took part in the sessions, as they take part in all other phases of R.A.F. station-life these days, seemed to me on the whole less vocal, or slightly less unembarrassed, than the men, in putting their questions—except on those stations where there was already a long tradition of discussion groups—in which cases they were at least as vocal, and often rather more vocal, than the men! Whether there is any conclusion, sinister or otherwise, to be drawn from this I do not know.)

The answers to the questions, sometimes expanded here more than I have been able to expand them at the time, are the best that I have been able to give. All of the points of view expressed are strictly unofficial—in the sense that I have sought no authority from anyone, nor from any institution, the Foreign Office or the Soviet Embassy, for giving them. They have no authoritative backing of any sort. They are my own reading of the matter, that is all. And some of them are largely conjectural.

I travelled extensively in Soviet Russia each year between 1931 and 1937. I saw one phase of Russia in war conditions in 1941. I have known as friends Walter Duranty, Louis Fischer, Maurice Hindus (three of the best writers on modern Russia), each of whom has lived in Russia for at least a decade; and have had night-long discussions with them, learning from them, who know so much, something of what they know. I have read a great deal of standard Russian history—since so vital a key to Russia's present is to be found in its past—and I have read very little modern “Soviet Propaganda.”

Many of the question—and answers—will seem elemen-

tary to those who have first-hand knowledge of the subject. But the point is that so many people in England have neither first-hand knowledge, nor even the valuable second-hand knowledge that comes from having read a single unbiased newspaper article. Air Force Officers with wide experience of the Service, and of many other walks of life outside the Service, have frankly admitted to me that ninety per cent. of what I have said has, for them, covered altogether new ground.

Certain questions have been able to be answered with facts that are by now indisputable—that could be challenged by no one. As regards my conjectural answers in other cases, I claim no sort of infallibility. A world-famous philosopher used to end off his lectures with the remark, “This is my truth. Now show me yours!”—an admission at least that truth may have many facets. I have observed Russian “tendencies” over a number of years; and my guesses at their outcome may turn out to have been sometimes somewhere near the mark. I claim no more.

And if I have been able, in the words of my first mentor, to “tell our own boys what the Russian boys think they’re fighting for”—then I have carried out by commission.

H. G.

CHAPTER I

“RUSSIAN BACKGROUND”

TWO things are essential to get clear at the outset in order to have any understanding of the contemporary U.S.S.R.—in order, that is, to get in any sort of perspective and understanding what it has been up to in the last twenty-five years (what it is now, and in what spirit it is conducting its war at the moment), and even what it will be up to for many years to come.

One of these things—the lesser important, though not unimportant—is to realise the extreme of misrepresentation *from all sides* that Soviet Russia has suffered from at the hands of the British Press for the last twenty-five years.

I say “from all sides” advisedly. For, at the beginning certain “Left” papers over-reached themselves in enthusiasm and began to carry on as though Soviet Russia were already an earthly Paradise.

Now this was nonsense; could be seen to be nonsense by anyone who bothered to travel there and to use an eye and half his own judgment; *and was known by the Russians themselves to be nonsense.*

In all the years I travelled there (1931-37) I noticed the same thing: the Russians would be showing one, with pride and pleasure, their schools, their hospitals, their crèches, their factories—but, in the early years especially, they would all come back to the same point insistently, saying, “We hope you have liked what you have seen. Not bad, is it? But, if you possibly can, come back to us in a year’s time, in two years’ time, better still, in five years’ or ten years’ time, and *then* we will be able to show you where we really think we are going!”

They themselves knew that they were only passing through a transition period; and they themselves made no claim to having achieved already an earthly Paradise. . . . So, in one direction those of us who believed what we read in the Press had been led up the garden path!

In the other direction, the very much larger body of newspapers who form public opinion, the "Right" newspapers, had led us very much farther up another garden path. By-gones ought possibly to remain by-gones—though I have never seen the logic of this if anything is to be learnt from them; but it is worth putting briefly on record that, for more than two decades on end, the body of the nation, and its news-purveyors, seemed to have developed, in Nietzsche's shattering phrase, the "Will to Stupidity"—the belief that we *must* not look, we *must* not know, "*it is dangerous if other people get to know,*" what is happening to the vast experiment in Soviet Russia.

No lie seemed to be too big to be worth putting out and to find credence. Fantastic legends, such as that of the "nationalisation of women," flourished like the green bay-tree. Phantasmagoric stories—such as that of the White Russian General, kidnapped in Paris, smuggled through Germany in a milk-churn or a sardine-tin, tortured to death in the Lubianka—were caught hold of—and were testified to by gathering clouds of witnesses in subsequent editions—until some concrete fact would come to light—such as the finding of the General's body in a lake in the Bois in Paris—proving that the original event, and its later troupe of witnesses, were, all alike, figments of pure imagination. In certain instances, still remembered by those with interest in such matters, British journalism (and British foreign news-service, in which British reputation has always been high) seemed to have dropped to its nadir.*

* An honourable exception to all of the above was the *Manchester Guardian*.

I myself in 1931 wrote a series of articles commissioned by a certain large-circulation daily newspaper. In them I never pretended that Soviet Russia was an earthly Paradise. I hinted that certain things were slack and slow there, with much lee-way to make up. But I also hinted that Soviet Russia was not basically unhappy—that the cliché, much favoured by our Press of the time, that "no Russian had smiled since the Revolution," was obviously untrue. I had seen more dancing and singing and opera (and circuses and pantomimes) there than one could see in any other country in the same time. I said that the country of Russia was plainly pressing onwards with the sort of intensity of effort—the excitement of achievement—of any country that has been given a target ahead of it, and means to reach that target. I summed up by saying that Soviet Russia was the sort of country that it would be at least worth while keeping our eye on.

(This estimate seemed to me basically fair at the time. Looking back at it twelve years later, it still seems to me not bad, as a tentative shot made then.)

My paper kept the articles many weeks without printing them; then ultimately, in response to my repeated enquiries, told me that, though they were quite agreeable to paying for them, they had decided, after long deliberation, not to print them. They were obviously verging on the "dangerous." . . .

The paper had for a decade past based its Leaders on the assumption that Soviet Russia was governed by lunatics and fanatics and incompetents—and that every Bolshevik ate a baby a day for his breakfast. They wished, for a further decade, to go on declaring that Soviet Russia was governed by lunatics and fanatics and incompetents, and that every Bolshevik ate a baby a day for his breakfast.

The instance of the commissioning of my articles, and the paying for them, and then scrapping them, is only important

because scores of instances of the same thing were happening at that time.

Churchill sent a message to Stalin many months ago saying, "*We have done a great beating down of barriers between our two countries.*" That is true. We have. But there are still barriers, at the back of all our minds, put there by the last twenty-five years of deliberate misrepresentation and suppression. . . .

* * *

There remains something much more important still—the realisation of exactly where the Russia of the Tsars stood—the realisation of the abysmal and mediæval backwardness that overshadowed the vast Empire, right up to the last days of its Imperial existence. It is impossible to over-stress this matter. The key to Russian modern history is found in Russia's recent past history.

Maurice Paléologue, the last French Ambassador to the Court of the last Tsar (his Ambassador's term of office lasted up to the time of the Revolution), was much more than a mere Ambassador. He was (a) a personal friend of Nicholas II, the last Tsar, and he claimed in his "*Memoirs*" that he was a collateral relative of the house of Romanov (the early Russian Tsars took as their emblem the Byzantine Eagle—gained by the marriage of an early Tsar to Sophie Paléologus, sister to an Emperor of Byzantium); (b) he was the *sort* of intelligent Frenchman who enjoyed living in the rich, sophisticated, cultured air and circles of the St. Petersburg of the years just before 1914.

i.e. : He was a friend of the régime; the last person in the world to be a revolutionary himself, and the last person to have any sympathy with any revolutionaries.

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And yet he says in his “Ambassador’s Memoirs,” and repeats more than once, because he thinks it so important for an understanding of the epoch: “The Russia of the years that I am writing about (*circa* 1900-1914) was *not*, as so many people imagine, to be understood as a country that is like some Western-European country merely thirty or forty or fifty years out of date. It is not like that at all! Scratch underneath the surface of the cultured St. Petersburg circle, and you get back to a country that is still like a Western-European country was—four and five and six hundred years ago—back before Western Europe had had its French Revolution, or its Reformation, or its Renaissance: you stretch back to a country that is still in the darkness of the Middle Ages! . . .”

Thus speaks no wild young revolutionary crying in the wilderness, but an admitted friend of the old régime; and it is as such that his extraordinarily sweeping statements have to be checked up and challenged.

It is easy to check him up on a few cardinal points.

Education:—In 1914, between 80 per cent. and 90 per cent. of all Russia’s millions were totally illiterate—could not read, could not write, could not spell out the simplest placard. Ninety per cent. of all the Tsarist armies went off in 1914 to fight Germany, not knowing where Germany was on the map—not knowing, never having had occasion to hear the word before, if “Germany” were a man or a thing or a woman. . . .

(This question of nation-wide “illiteracy” was one of the first things the Soviets had to see to. In the face of lack of schoolrooms, shortage of teachers, shortage, even, of textbooks and writing-paper, they drove on in their scheme for their grandiloquently-termed “liquidation of illiteracy.” They took it, as Russians do, with extravagant seriousness. And in the early years it was a common sight in villages to see the village grandfathers, with flowing beards, chased off,

hand-in-hand with their little grand-daughters, to sit at desks in the local village schoolrooms, to learn to read and write their own language. The Russians at least have never failed in whole-heartedness. . . . !)

But the effort won through. After two decades of such effort the percentages are now reversed. Ninety per cent. of Soviet Russians are now more or less "literate"—and in many cases much more than barely literate—are technically highly advanced.

Compare Russia in 1914 (with its eighty per cent. to ninety per cent. of illiterates) with the England of the time. In 1914, England had already had its Education Acts sixty or seventy years—and even before that a fair percentage of its population could at least read and write.

So in this respect the Russia of the last Tsars was at least seventy and more years behind Western civilisation.

* * *

In another respect, that of Parliamentary Government, it was more out of date still

In all the centuries of its history, sometimes very brilliant history, the Russia of the Tsars had only known about ten years of anything approaching Parliamentary Government.

Its first "Duma," its first attempt at Parliament, had been assembled in 1906—within a dozen years before the fall of Tsardom. It was not a powerful Parliament, it had no power to create laws; it was only there in an advisory capacity. But, even so, it fell foul of the Tsarist Government—and in a few months was quietly dismissed, given the air, was sacked

There were two more "Dumas" before the final one; and the last "Duma" was sitting in the years from 1914 up to the time of the Revolution.

A dozen years of semi-Parliamentary government on the Russian side! We had had our own Parliament, continually growing in prestige and power, since Simon de Montfort's

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first attempt at it in 1262. . . . So in that respect Tsarist Russia was at least several centuries behind the times.

* * *

Last, most telling proof of all—a fact that is almost shocking to those who hear it historically stated for the first time—it was only about eighty years ago, in 1861, i.e., *almost within living memory*, that serfdom was abolished from being the rule and the Law in Tsarist Russia.

Serfdom was the rule and the law by which the peasant lived on the land and worked on the land—but he did not own the land, except in very isolated exceptions.

On the contrary, he (and his wife and his children) were the absolute property of the owners of the land. They could be bought and sold (the great classic Russian satire, Gogol's *Dead Souls*, deals with the buying and selling of peasants alive or dead—if they were lately dead, their names had probably not been taken off the contemporary Registers, and were thus still auctionable goods, and security at banks); they could be left in wills and inherited; they could be popped to the local pawnbroker—in short, they enjoyed exactly the same status on that land as so many head of pigs or cattle or poultry. . . . And this persisted up to the year 1861—that is to say, up to well on in the reign of Queen Victoria—up to within living memory! We in England having abolished our own form of serfdom to the land back in the twelfth and thirteen centuries. . . .

Now think exactly what this means.

It means that in modern Soviet Russia *at the moment* there are still living certain people—a few, the very old, the “eighty-year-old and over”—who were born under the rule of serfdom, who may actually have been born as serfs. It means that literally millions of modern Soviet Russians, of the older generation, are the sons and daughters, or grandsons and grand-daughters, of serfs.

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Two instances that may bring the point home to English readers :—Chechov himself might have been alive to-day except that he died early of consumption. But Chechov's grandfather had been a serf ; and Chechov himself was born before the Liberation. A girl of the youngest generation of all, a Soviet citizeness, aged about 21, very fine looking and intelligent, a science student at Leningrad University, told me that she herself had a great-grandfather who had been a serf, and who had been flogged to death as a serf. . . . I admit that this instance brought the realisation (of the fewness of the generations between sheer barbarity and civilisation) home to me with something like horror.

* * *

And all this background-history—the illiteracy, the absence of a centuries-old tradition of free speech and the Parliamentary liberalities, and serfdom persisting up to the grandfathers' generation—have left their mark on modern Russia.

I do not in the least mean that they have left the “serfmentality” behind them. It is obvious that Hitler, his generals, and his armies, have had convincing proof that this is far from being the case. The inventiveness, the ingenuity, the passionate patriotism of what they have come up against, has shocked them and shaken them.

But I do mean that, in judging any aspect of modern Soviet Russia, its civilian amenities, its standards of living, clothing, housing, its day-to-day existence as seen in its cities as apart from the effort that it is putting out for its armed forces—a visitor will find so many of his perplexities and discords resolved—will gain so enormously in understanding and sense of perspective of what he will see—if he continually keeps in mind this fact of proved history : that up to a generation or two ago, Russia was still in the Dark (and rightly called Dark) Ages.

Apart from this basic fact of backwardness, there are a

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few further eventualities that are an aid to comprehension of Russia's set-up to-day.

In 1914 there was the disastrous war against Germany; and on top of that the equally disastrous “Wars of Intervention”—the armies of five different nations advancing on Russia at various times from north, south, east and west, to take a smack at the newly founded U.S.S.R. We in England count our own “last war” to have lasted from 1914 to 1918. The Russians count theirs to have lasted from 1914 to 1922; for it was not until the latter year that the last of the invading armies was driven off their soil.

Russia was by that time bankrupt, ruined and disorganised to an extent no civilised country has been for centuries. (The contention of some of our leading lights at that time that “the Bolsheviks had taken over and bankrupted and ruined Russia,” is not quite factually accurate, for reasons above stated. The Russia of 1917 was considerably lacking in organised prosperity.) And on top of that again, occurred what might have been expected to occur in a country of that vast size, in that state of semi-civilisation, and in that state of disorganisation—namely, very widespread famine and very widespread typhus. . . .

I think this completes in outline a perfunctory sketch of the general Russian scene in the earliest years of the 'twenties. Details can be filled in from imagination—and are still likely to be slightly less dreadful than the reality.

* * *

It was about this time that our own H. G. Wells took it into his head to revisit Russia (he had been there once in the pre-1914 years), to have a look at things for himself, and to meet Lenin.

And he took a look for himself—and met Lenin; and returned to England saying, in words much later reported to me by a friend of his: “I have met the wildest dreamer in the world. I have seen that vast country and its present

condition; I have seen its backwardness; its disorganisation, its famine; and I have sat with Lenin in his small room at the Kremlin, already talking about 'the Electrification of All the Russias!' Where can he get the copper to do that? Where can he get his technical skill?" He tells of this interview in his *Russia in the Shadows*, where he calls Lenin the "Dreamer in the Kremlin."

Now this is interesting—for our own H. G. has been in his time not only an assiduous and daringly brilliant prophet and exponent of things to come, but often enough was an astonishingly accurate one. But in this case it was not he but Lenin who had the bolder prophetic vision of the two.

It was the extraordinary mind of Lenin who had already seen, even at that time and in those circumstances, that Russia must start getting educated in the first place—that a nation four-fifths illiterate would not have the smallest chance of handling successfully the intensive mechanisation that was shortly to be planned for it; he saw that the nation must learn Discipline for the same purpose—to the surprise of many people, Lenin's speeches and exhortations are full of the word "discipline": "*Learn from the German his discipline—or else we will lie forever in the dust as slaves!*" (and this study and this discipline were to apply equally to his own closest circle in the government. "*The time is past for fine phrases; now we must get down to endless unspectacular desk work.*" Again, "*We are old, hardened revolutionaries, and know all about making revolutions. Now we must go to school all over again and learn the technique of running a government. In many ways we have much to learn from any small tradesman who knows how to give change over a counter, and to keep his stock straight. . . .*") And again, still at that early time, he had coined his extraordinary and arresting phrase about the "Electrification of All the Russias"—a slogan—something easily remembered in half a dozen words—that foreshadowed, in

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outline, the whole vision—the harnessing of the whole terrific natural resources of that vast country, and the turning of a hundred and eighty million people into a modern and industrially-based nation.

And this is what Russia's task has been for the last twenty-five years; starting, as they did, not from scratch, but from such an immeasurably big distance behind scratch. . . .

And it is fair to say that in the light of some such short glimpse of past history, most of the moves they have made in the last twenty-five years fall into some sort of sequence, pattern and logic—and that *without* a realisation of it, it is almost impossible for them to fall into any sequence or any pattern or any logic.

The key to Russia's present history is to be found in Russia's past history—plus Marx, plus Lenin, plus electrification. But of these, history and Lenin are the two greater.

* * *

I knew a man years ago, an ex-Naval officer of the last war, Alexander Wicksteed, who went out to teach English in the University of Moscow in the early years after the Revolution, and who later died there. (He used to say, not entirely jokingly, that he had transferred himself permanently to Russia because it was the only place in the world where he could get enough money to live as he liked by working only three (or it may have been two) hours a day. It is true that his needs were simple; he used to walk round Moscow wearing an overcoat that a London cabby would have blushed to be seen in; and he lived Moscow-fashion of those days, in one room of a tenement, with other people's babies howling in the corridor outside, with his books and bottles of cheap Caucasian wine for company.

But he knew his stuff. He could say with truth, as

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Kipling said of the India of an earlier epoch, "I have eaten your bread and salt"—he had lived for years as the Russians, with the Russians; he was sought after by most of the European celebrities, Shaw and others, who flashed through Moscow in those years, wanting to know what it was all about; and he could talk enchantingly of what he knew.

He was a mine of stories of all the small human tragedies consequent on a vast semi-Asiatic nation trying desperately, against time, to cram its Oriental spaciousness and fatalism, its fecklessness and indolence, into the garments, as it were, of the European mode of thought and action.

And he could tell of the comedies, too. Of how his class in the University of Moscow was always late in turning up—lateness being a point of honour with the Muscovites of the time; of how one particular day they were all much later than usual; and how on his saying, "Hi, what's the matter with you?" they all replied cheerfully, "Oh, that's quite all right! we've all just been attending the first meeting of the newly-founded 'League for Punctuality.' . . ." Of all the Russian anecdotes I know, this tells most in fewest words of the Russian mentality of the times.

He had another story*: Of how the Government built an imposing building in the centre of Moscow, labelling it in vast letters across its façade, "*For the Electrification of All the Russias.*" But how, on close approach to it, a small piece of paper could be seen pinned to its main portal, saying rather pathetically, "Please knock loudly. Bell out of order." The vaulting ambition of the planners proposed to electrify a continent—at a time when their technique was not quite up to keeping a bell-push in order—or at least

* These, and others, are to be found in Wicksteed's quiet and unassuming little book, "Life under the Soviets," published about 1926. It was almost the first book to treat the Soviet Russians as human beings—"human—all too human," as Wicksteed himself used to say.

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not for long . . . (And twenty years later they were out-smarting the technique of Hitler's armies !)

The lack of this minimum slice of background-history that I have been dishing up in this chapter helps to account for the fact of many people, sympathetic, well-wishing, and sometimes intelligent people at that, going out from England or America in the peacetime years, prepared to be very impressed with what they saw—and coming back very deeply disillusioned. Their attitude on returning was, "Yes, we've seen multitudes of schools and crèches and hospitals and factories, all functioning satisfactorily, and more of them being built. Granted ! But—we've also seen plenty of slums still in some of the cities, and overcrowding in most of them ; and a deplorably shabby standard of general clothing ; and an almost pitifully meagre display of things to buy in the shops, by Western-European standards. . . . And, in short, we are much disillusioned in our awaited Soviet Earthly Paradise."

Here fallacy crowded upon fallacy. Firstly, they had been swallows of the dope put out by the small but vocal "Earthly Paradise" section of the Press—and the hangover resultant from the dope was almost a lethal one. (I know of a certain young Park Avenue communist who frankly packed her trunks after a couple of weeks of it and went straight back to America ; and the instance is not an isolated one.) Secondly, very slight knowledge of European conditions in general would have reminded them that Eastern-European standards have *always* been behind Western-European. (The proper way to approach modern Russia is not direct out of either Park Avenue or Park Lane, but via Eastern Poland, or the Balkans, or Constantinople. It is only then, familiar with the endless poverty and squalor of the Eastern-European scene, one gets a fair chance to see how far Soviet Russia has already lifted herself above it.)

Lastly, short acquaintance with Russian history in par-

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ticular—even no more history than I have touched upon in previous pages—would have let them know that the wonder was *not* that there were still slums, overcrowding, shabby clothes, small choice of fancy goods in shop windows, and so forth—but that the semi-miracle was that, even at that time, there were multitudinous schools, hospitals, crèches, sanatoria, etc., already in full operation, and countless numbers more being built.

Knowledge of past Russian history, again, would have explained, or even expected, the very widespread loss, wastage and destruction of newly installed machinery during the early Soviet years—a fact which, oddly enough, our own Press did report fully and even enthusiastically : such facts as that an old Russian *muzhik*, given a tractor for the first time in his life in place of the cow he had been accustomed to plough with, would not know much about machinery in general, and was quite capable of thinking that a bucket of sand was of equal use with a bucket of lubricating oil for feeding into the sump of a petrol engine—with similar misunderstandings happening with the larger plants in factories. (Which shortcomings, as I have said, many of our papers were quick to note, throwing in for good measure a touch of philosophy by saying, “Look at the old Russian ! When he *gets* his machinery he isn’t to be expected to know what to do with it ! He thinks a bucket of sand is just as good as a bucket of lubricating oil. He just smashes it up as soon as he looks at it. What’s the use of our giving Russia machinery anyhow ?” As a point of interest, Britain was not “giving” Russia machinery ; Russia was paying for it.)

But round about that time (1931) I was beginning to travel in Russia myself ; and having the good luck to meet several of our own British and American engineers who were out there under contract, teaching the Russians engineering technique, and helping them design and build their factories, I raised this question with them.

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And they replied, in much agreement, “It’s largely true. There has been, especially in the early years, very widespread smashing and wastage of machines through sheer ignorance. The older generation, in many cases, are hopeless—they don’t seem to be able to “take” modern mechanical technique. *But we are now beginning to get under us the newer generation—these same peasants’ and workers’ sons—who have now done four- and five-year engineering courses in their Universities here—and, believe you us, these are the very tops; they’re very quick, and they’re very keen—they follow us up like lynxes in anything we’re doing; they’re very mechanically minded; they’re just as good as our own boys back in Detroit. . . .*”

And I thought to myself, with a slight sinking in my heart: “*England is beginning to get about ten years behind-hand in her knowledge of Soviet Russia. Back in England we’re content—and will go on being content for years—for our own papers to go on paying out their not-so-very-funny jokes about the old muzhik who ruins his tractor through not knowing that it needs lubrication; and we’ll solemnly go on believing that this represents the latest state of Russian mechanisation . . . while technicians on the spot, who really do know what’s happening, are already beginning to say, “Watch this younger generation! They’re already as advanced as any in the world.”*”

But this was not the sort of reporting that the bulk of our newspapers thought suitable reading matter at that epoch.

* * *

It accounts lastly (this same fragment of history) for much that we were able to see even after Soviet Russia had come into the war—“we” being the R.A.F. Fighter Wing that went to North Russia in the late summer of 1941.

Where we were stationed was not in the heart of Soviet civilisation, but very far from it indeed. We were a few miles outside Murmansk, and Murmansk is the most

northerly Russian port in Europe, a hundred and seventy miles within the Arctic Circle. Leningrad, commonly accounted a Northern capital, was six hundred miles to the south of us; Moscow about fourteen hundred miles to the south-east. The area generally, the bleak Kola Peninsula, was so sparsely inhabited that something was able to happen there that could hardly have happened anywhere else in Europe—a German bomber crashed, the crew had to walk for it, and were able to walk for ten days and nights without seeing anyone, and without themselves being seen. . . . We were in a district that would have corresponded in the British Isles to Scapa, or Shetland, or Stornaway in the Outer Hebrides (only we were many parallels of latitude higher).

And yet even here, in this outermost rim of the Soviet orbit, we saw curious sights—a mixture of the primitive with the sharply modern—that would have been unaccountable without reference to Russia's period of transition—the struggle that a single generation had had to make to advance from the mediæval.

Wandering about amongst those low hills, covered with scrub and snow, and stunted silver birches, we noticed peasant-cabins built into the hillsides in the primitive tradition of centuries—unshaped logs, lined with felt for warmth, with snow and turf and branches covering the roofs—and noticed with considerable surprise that they were electric-lighted. Even there in those desolate Arctic wastes, some sort of far-reaching electric grid system had come into operation—and the power-work of the district was done off the grid.

The steep contrast was typical of much else that we were to see. The very second day we arrived on our forlorn northern aerodrome, and began operations (we were only about fifteen miles from the actual battle-line of the time), German aircraft came over to welcome us with a bomb-raid.

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The raid was ineffectual ; but it led to our seeing Soviet ack-ack fire in action for the first time. And it was genuinely astonishing to us, in its brilliance and volume and accuracy and speed. All our Fighter-boys, in Soviet Russia for the first time, but experienced in ack-ack fire, having fought the Germans since the Battle of Britain, turned to one another with something that almost amounted to a wild surmise, and uttered the single thought, “ Well—we’re bloody glad these chaps are *on* our side, and not against us ! ” In so modern and scientific a branch of lethal warfare as anti-aircraft gunnery, the hosts (always, incidentally, good and enthusiastic gunners since they first possessed artillery) had been able to give their guests something to think about within the second day of their landing. (Air Vice-Marshal Collier, who had been through some of the Moscow blitzes, confirmed this first impression. He told us that the volume of stuff thrown up into the skies was quite indescribable—that the whole city seemed to blaze upwards in one huge flame—and that the general effect was highly salutary, as the German bombers as a rule did not seem to get far past the outer defences:)

This combination of the peasant-huts, the ack-ack fire, and the electric lighting—the close juxtaposition of the modern and the mediæval—were typical of a great deal else that we were to see during our time there.

Some of the military and air force equipment that the Russians would show us—and show us with obvious pride and pleasure—would be quite frankly out of date as regards our own corresponding equipment—it would be nothing like so good. Much of the rest of their equipment would be entirely first-rate by our own or any other standards. And again, occasionally—as in such an incident as their ack-ack display—they would put out something that would make us feel—“ Well, they seem to have got a jump or two ahead of us in that one ! ” (The mixture also held good of their air-

craft, or such of it as we saw in that part of the world. Some of the types they were flying quite gaily against German Me.109s, were, in our eyes, obsolescent, to put it mildly. Other types, especially a certain medium-bomber that the Hurricanes were called upon to escort, gave our Hurricane pilots quite a lot to think about as regards its speed, rate of climb and ferocious armament.)

The brick-built headquarters-building where the officers of the Wing were given quarters—though away in the wilderness—was double-windowed, centrally-heated, and entirely suited to its functions and to the prevailing climate. But the main feature of the central-heating system, its furnace, was an astonishing example of the Russian genius for improvisation—a disused steam traction-engine, looking roughly contemporary with Stephenson's "Rocket," had been run close up to one of the walls of the H.Q. building, a wooden shed had been erected round it—and its boiler and firebox did duty for supplying hot water to the radiators within. (Perfectly effectual, by the way.)

The airmen's quarters were brick-built, double-windowed, with stoves in every room, and all airmen, as well as officers, were given a spotlessly clean change of sheets weekly. But the lavatory accommodation of both officers' and men's quarters was "outside sanitation"—and primitive at that.

The standard of civilian clothing was still low, shabby and shoddy by Western-European standards—but the winter equipment of the troops was usually superb. (The Wing, leaving behind it a small party of R.A.F. for the remaining winter months, was politely asked by the Soviet Authorities what assistance we would like in the matter of clothes. The answer we made was, "Give us, please, exactly what your own troops are wearing." The thick, skirted sheepskin coats, felt boots, and fur caps, formed a winter uniform that was above criticism.)

Murmansk itself, fifteen or so miles away from us, was a

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town which, twenty-five years ago, had consisted chiefly of wooden sheds and wharfs in a wilderness. It is now large, expanding, with the basis of an idea of "lay-out" in its planning, and increasingly brick-built. But some of its main streets are still innocent of paving of any sort. And yet, again, the town's chief building, its "House of Culture," is fine and spacious, housing within itself a fine theatre, a smaller cinema, a dance-hall, a library, reading-rooms, and other rooms for exhibitions. . .

One could multiply these points of contrast and comparison—the new cheek-by-jowl with the old—the shabby with the grandiose—the sophisticated with the primitive—almost indefinitely—still bearing in mind that from the nature of our mission and its allocation, the Kola Peninsula, we can hardly claim to have come in touch with Soviet "civilisation" at all. We were in what could be accounted "the wilds of beyond." We were where the U.S.S.R. stretches far within the Arctic Circle.

But the presence of the contrast is widespread as regards Russia.

Any average citizen of England going out to a central or southern Russian town to-day would be much impressed with a great deal that he saw—the universal urge towards culture in the widest sense (and the care and lavishness with which the central government fosters this urge), the medical services and the sanatoria, the theatres and concert-halls, the sports grounds and swimming-pools, the housing schemes, and the crèches; these represent a standard that in many of its aspects England itself has not yet achieved—and in the case of crèches and government allocations to culture, has hardly more than yet begun.

But at the same time, and hand in hand with all this, any average citizen of England would still be liable, if he retained his British middle-class standards of comparison, to be considerably shocked by many things—the over-

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crowding in cities (in spite of the ferocious energy of the building programmes the rate of construction has not been able to keep pace with the increased population of many cities, Moscow particularly); the scarcity (and the high price) of civilian clothes; the lack in some cases, the scarcity and high prices in others, of what can be called generally “consumers’ goods”—ranging from gramophones to motor cars, from watches to household furniture—the superficialities and conveniences and easy decorations of life.

These things will undoubtedly be, in the future. But they are not yet—or not yet in any profusion.

A Russian private soldier offered one of our airmen the equivalent of £8 spending-power in roubles for a very ordinary type of English watch. In the 1930’s an English girl who had lived and worked some years with the Russians, on Russian wages, told me that for her first year all she was able to find in the way of living accommodation in Moscow was an “*uglók*”—a “corner”—i.e., she possessed as her entire apartment literally a “corner” of a room, of which other citizens inhabited the remaining corners.

* * *

It is as well to get clear about these things as a background, against which all facts of all Soviet modern life can be seen in proportion and perspective.

Starting, a single generation ago, not from scratch but almost immeasurably behind scratch, they have had, as an entire nation, twenty-five years of feverish—often almost nightmare—work. (One can still re-imagine some of those early typhus-and-famine years in retrospect, with admiration and wonder for the men who dared to take control in those times.)

They have been able to do so much and so brilliantly—including the training and equipping of an Army that for twenty-seven months has been able to fight on equal terms with Hitler’s—more months, to be strictly accurate, than

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any other European army or combination of armies had up to then been able to fight him for days.

But they have not been able to do it *all* !

The twenty-five years' work of the generation has had to go back into such basic, essential, and outwardly unrewarding things as building up the "heavy industries," cutting vast canals, planning and creating Dnieprostroy dams, building factories, building hospitals, building schools—and *not* into giving themselves a good time in the way of lipsticks and lingerie—in which respects they are still almost pathetically hard-up.

Art and Health have been respected; have even almost been made gods. But there has been much Austerity—in a sense in which England for centuries past has not needed to know the word.

CHAPTER II

THE SPIRIT OF RUSSIA

THE Russians have a Home Guard, but they don't call them "Home Guard." They call them, instead, "Extermination Detachments" . . . There can be much significance in a word, a phrase, or a label. "Extermination Detachments" has as martial a ring and clang in it as a sword falling on armour—or grenades blowing up a tank.

It is in this spirit that Soviet Russia is fighting the present war.

It is impossible to bring home to an uninvaded country (even if a heavily bombed country) more than a few brief glimpses—a dim shadow of a realisation—of how an invaded country can take things—the state of tension, the

state of endeavour; and Russia has been heavily invaded.

About 40 *million* Soviet citizens, in the Soviet Government's own admission, have passed under the rule of Hitler. We are inclined to forget this occasionally, but it remains a fact. And forty millions, even out of a population of 180 millions, is still a mass of humanity almost equal to the entire population of England, Scotland and Wales. Furthermore, its Armed Forces have lost, again on the Soviet Government's own admission, something between five and six million men in casualties. It is common knowledge that Soviet authorities are no longer pleased with the casual cliché that sometimes slips into our papers about "Russia's inexhaustible man-power." As the entire rest of the Soviet population, with the exception of juveniles and specially selected students, is already passionately absorbed in the war effort, either in the armed forces (potential casualties), or in the production of munitions or food—it remains a matter of speculation as to what exactly is meant by the word "inexhaustible." At least it is unbecoming for any outside Power in the world to throw the adjective about lightly.

Soviet Russia has lost in territory about $\frac{3}{4}$ million square miles—an area roughly equivalent to all Germany and all Italy lumped together. Moreover, it is the western area of Russia that has been overrun, i.e., the more populated, industrialised, and cultivated area.

The Ukraine has not only the richest grain-growing belt of land in the Soviet Union, but the richest grain-growing belt of land anywhere in the world—the "black-soil" belt. Also, in addition to growing more than a quarter of the grain of the entire Union, it produced proportions, varying from half to three-quarters, of such essential war materials as coal (60 per cent.), pig-iron (60 per cent.), iron ore (63 per cent.), aluminium (72 per cent.), and agricultural machinery (70 per cent.).

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The Dnieprostroy power-plant (in territory taken by the Germans) did not produce power for a single industrial city, however vast; but for an immense network of such cities.

Statistics are boring and confusing, and can be made to prove (as has been said) almost anything on earth. But, to put the picture of what Soviet Russia has lost into a shape easily visualised by an Englishman, it might be said that he would have to visualise an England almost cut in half. The Russians have lost cities that in relative producing power would mean the loss to England of Manchester, Birmingham, Glasgow and Coventry.

The extraordinary foresight of the Soviet Authorities, years ago, in planning shadow factories the other side of the Urals—partly because they saw the present clash coming, partly because that region was due for development anyhow—is a factor to which world-civilisation can be deeply grateful.

Glimpses at random of Russia at War—for the subject is too vast for any one writer to treat of it as a coherent whole. He would need the myriad eyes of the cine-cameras of the scores of cameramen who made "*The Defeat of the Germans in Front of Moscow*" (Spring, 1942) and "*One Day of War*" (Autumn, 1942), those two grand films which range over so wide an area of the front—yes, and then he would need myriad eyes to cover the work of the populace stretching back eastward from the front, behind Moscow, back to the Urals, behind the Urals, and away into far Eastern Asia, toiling to supply the wants of the front.

Any individual writer can only recall a few glimpses that came under his own eye, and quote, from other observers, other instances that seem to him to have the stamp of truth on them, because they correspond with his own experience—that seem to him, on analogy, likely to be true.

Safonov at Chess.—Two Soviet fighter-pilots in the ante-room of a General, before a dinner-party. Characteristic-

ally enough, having a few minutes to fill in, they sit down to a game of chess (Russia plays chess where England plays bridge or poker). I look at the progress of the game. (It has only been going a few minutes, but I have never seen anything like it; the chessboard has been converted into a slaughterhouse! The correct "moves" of the game are being observed—but never in so few moves can Staunton, the classic, have seen such carnage. The opponents are throwing their pieces at each other in something that looks like two head-on cavalry charges.

Only an insignificant glimpse, perhaps. But from it one thinks that one sees something—a psychological indication—of the ruthlessness with which Col. Safonov, crack fighter-pilot, with twenty victories to his credit, and "Hero of the Soviet Union," leads his Hurricane squadrons against the Hun. . . .

Girls at Work in Archangel.—Singing, sawing timber, loading it up into lorries—working away hour-long, with the sort of enthusiasm and energy, the "ecstasy of doing," in Gorki's phrase, that *could* not be produced by any guards standing over them with whips or guns. When the job was done, and it was a long one, they drove off in lorries, singing. They were in the command of a girl of about twenty-two, leading both the working and the singing.

Men at Work in Archangel (noted by several observers).—"They don't seem to have any sense of set hours. The job is simply there till it gets done. If a certain ship at the dockside needs thirty-six hours to unload, the same gang seems to be on the job for the thirty-six hours. . . . Then they fall asleep where they stand; then they go off to clean up and to get something to eat. Then they are back on the next job." (How un-Trade Union! But, then, Archangel is singularly important to the work of the Front Line—and there is a war on—and they know that no one is getting a pull-in of "costs-plus-ten-per-cent." out of them.)

Women at Work in Murmansk.—Murmansk, only about 15 miles from the Front Line, has become very much a garrison town. All civilians not closely connected with the armed forces have been evacuated from it, thousands and thousands of them, up the Northern Dvina river in paddle-steamers and barges. Most of those that are left have semi-military jobs. Amongst them are many women—tough-looking girls for the most part—in uniform (breeches and khaki shirts) with revolvers in their belts, doing traffic-control and police work. They appear at the Sunday evening dances in the “*Dom Kultura*,” and are quite willing to be danced with. But all the same they look as though, if any matter of police or security business arose, they would quite enjoy a bit of shooting.

It is well known in England that Soviet women are taking an intensive part in every phase of the war effort (as they are in many phases of it in England); but one wonders if England realises quite how far this has been brought. I do not mean merely an affirmative answer to the query, “Do the Russians have women fighter-pilots?” I believe that they have a few, exceptionally fitted by temperament and physique, but we saw none of them up at Murmansk—and I can well believe that such of them as there are, are rare exceptions. It is undoubted that they have many women doing air-ferry work (as we have in England), and some of them have set up records in heavy-aircraft long-distance flights in Siberia and so forth.

What seemed to me more impressive, because more characteristic, was a story that I had on the direct authority of the British Admiralty: A certain Soviet merchant vessel was sailing in one of our own convoys round the North Cape many months ago. The Soviet vessel was dive-bombed and set on fire, and for three days the engine-room staff fought the fire between-decks. At the end of that time the signal had to be made to abandon ship. The members of

the engine-room staff appeared for the first time—and all of them were women. . . . Anyone who has been in the cramped spaces and heat of a ship's engine-room, and who can picture what the horrors of a between-decks fire can be, will have some idea of the toughness that this record implies.

In this connection the descent on England some months ago of Lt. Pavlichenko may be recalled. The Lieutenant was sent abroad as member of a "Students' Delegation" to a conference in the United States, with the incidental reputation, as a woman-sniper, of having killed 309 Germans during the defence of Soviet cities. I knew some of the Home Authorities responsible for taking her round England, when she passed through here on her return, and they told me that they could very well believe the story of her mass slaughter of Germans, for she had very nearly killed *them*. . . . She had been down to South Wales to have a look at industry in that direction; she had then been given some parties at London's smarter resorts, and her opinion of these had not been flattering. The query of "ARE YOU at war, or aren't you?" must have been very hard to suppress in the mind of a recent citizeness of Stalingrad.

Mlle. Pavlichenko was then taken up North on long train journeys, where the trains were late and unheated, and there was a stringent black-out reigning, and nothing to eat or drink in the bars and buffets—and all of this she thought perfectly swell, as being concrete evidence of a country strenuously at war. . . .

Then, again, on one of her last days, she was taken down on a Saturday afternoon to inspect bomb damage in East End London. This, again, did not, apparently, impress her enormously, as she had seen certain Soviet areas worse flattened out; but, bowling back in the car along the Mile End Road, she had spotted an Auxiliary Fire Station, and expressed the liveliest desire to look over it. My friend

(the narrator to me of the episode) told me she had thought to herself at that moment, "Heavens, a fine sleepy Saturday afternoon, not a cloud in the sky or a warning in the air—how do I know that all the boys in the Fire Station won't be playing darts or having a nap?"

The boys, however, were all on their toes. Mlle. Pavlichenko inspected everything avidly, asked a multitude of questions, and took a multitude of notes. Then, after innocently having asked how long they took to turn out in the event of an alarm, and having had the reply "Sixty seconds" (or some such time), glanced at her wrist-watch, said, "Come on, let's try it," went up to the alarm-gong and gave it a bang—and timed the performance of the turn-out. . . .

This seems to me to have been an entirely legitimate and intelligent proceeding. The turn-out was a good one, and Pavlichenko was pleased with it, and it is conceivable that the crew themselves, if a keen crowd, were pleased with it too; it showed a *respect* and interest in them and their work that could certainly not have been conveyed by a superficial "inspection" and a few banal compliments.

Lastly, it showed that Mlle. Pavlichenko herself took her own sight-seeing tour seriously. Whatever her ultimate report to her own High Command, either favourable or unfavourable, at least her home authorities would not be able to shake their heads and say, "Ah, but those English only showed you what they wanted you to see. . . .!" The report will be based on observed evidence.

My admiration for Mlle. Pavlichenko (whom I never met) goes up on the whole episode.

Maxim Gorki, 1935.—Of Māxim Gorki seeing and declaring in 1935, with an artist's intense vision—or the clairvoyance of an old man on the point of death (he died a year later), what Fascism really means, which most of our esteemed politicians were then still abysmally blind to:

"Fascism . . . the negation of everything existing under the name of European culture. To protest against it . . . a splendid action natural to artists. . . . It is doomed by history. Its end means the beginning of happiness for all mankind." And Gorki's phrase, quoted years later by Stalin in his celebrated Order of the Day : "If the enemy does not surrender he must be destroyed. Fascism is a mad beast that must be crushed. Its destruction is an act of supreme justice to be followed by world-wide friendship and the building of a new life."

Of Tolstoy's eighteen-year-old schoolboy, Petya Rostov, in "War and Peace," demanding of his family to be allowed to join the Armies, saying, "I can't go on as a student while the Fatherland is in danger" in 1812. The phrase "*while the Fatherland is in danger,*" with all its implications to English ears of heroics and theatricalism, might quite literally, in its actual words, be heard on the lips of many Soviet Russians to-day, a hundred and thirty years later. The operative word itself, "Fatherland"—„РОДИНА"—meaning, in Russian, the "country of one's own blood," has been in ever-increasing use in the Soviet vocabulary in the last ten years of Stalin's direction of the State. (But a Petya Rostov's demand to join the Forces would be very carefully scrutinised to-day. Students of promise are regarded as the truest capital in the hands of the future State. Enrolments to the Universities are still continuing, even though it is wartime. But a contemporary Rostov, if he had outstanding talents in any one direction, might easily be told by higher Soviet authorities that it was his over-riding duty to this same „РОДИНА" *not* to join the Armies, but to continue his abstract researches in biology, or bio-chemistry, or in anything else that the State might have use for in its future years of peace.

Red Arnty Discipline.—A point that was slightly astonishing to some of our boys : the Russians are extremely hot

on saluting. They learned our ranks straight away, and saluted us punctiliously as far as ranks were visible on our uniforms, and were equally punctilious towards their own officers. In Soviet Russia one does *not* slop about saying "Comrade General" to you, "Comrade Colonel" to someone else, without recognising the courtesy and respect due to an officer.

Officers' messes and men's messes are segregated. Certain of our airmen drifted down one night to the local village, and unintentionally came to rest in the local officers' mess. They were made welcome for the evening and given drinks—but we had a politely worded request from the Russian General the next day, asking that we would let our troops know that, as in England, officers' clubs and troops' clubs were not interchangeable.

As in England, anyone who in action shows powers of leadership and initiative has a chance of a commission. *When* he is promoted to commissioned rank, i.e., becomes an officer, he is treated as an officer.

This aspect of Soviet discipline was confirmed to me by a British Naval Officer who had worked in collaboration with the Red Navy.

Regulations on Discipline in the Red Army: "Soviet military discipline is founded . . . on the unswerving devotion of its people and on the feeling of high responsibility of each soldier towards the entrusted task of the defence of the Socialist Fatherland. . . . Soviet discipline in the Red Army must be higher, stricter, and more exacting than the discipline in other armies. The strictest discipline is characteristic of the Red Army."

Guards at Sevastopol.—Of the well-authenticated case of the five men of a Marine regiment defending an approach to Sevastopol. Down to their last ammunition except for a few hand-grenades, they tied these in bunches to their belts and then threw themselves under the advancing tanks,

blowing themselves and the tanks up at the same time. (This utter self-sacrifice—the deliberate seeking of annihilation to achieve an object—is paralleled by a British infantryman, a posthumous V.C. of the last war, who deliberately threw himself in front of a German machine-gun during an advance, to cover the advance of his comrades; and by V.C. instances in this war. But in all these cases the deed is one of an absolute order of heroism.)

More than one Englishman, on reading the account of the Soviet Marines and their grenades, and similar stories of Russian self-sacrifice, has asked quite seriously if this did not merely signify “primitive disregard for life.” Well, well! It would surely be arguable that the more primitive the form of life, the deeper the instinct for self-preservation, unclouded by any other (or by far fewer) considerations. The “primitive disregard” theory could also, of course, be used to rob every British V.C. of his achievement.

The cock-crowing Cossack.—An account that has all the artlessness of a genuine original, of a Cossack scout sent forward to a German-occupied village in the guerilla-country, to bag a German officer, if possible, alive. Of his hiding in a hen-house for cover till a German officer and his orderly passed by; of his imitating a cockcrow, to lure the orderly into the hen-roost after loot. (“All our family are known in our village as splendid imitators of cock-crowing,” said the narrator with simple pride.) Of his eliminating the orderly, and dragging the officer as far as a nearby forest—and the tale ends with an incredible bargaining scene between the Cossack and an old wood-cutter—the officer’s saddle against a length of rope from the wood-cutter, with which to tie the officer up. The tale may be authentic, or it may be pure fabrication, or it may be a mixture of both. But it has at least “kinship” to something that is authentic—the naïveté, the resourcefulness, the peasant sense of inconsequential humour that breaks out at moments even

in the present most ghastly of wars. (And the tradition of being a "splendid imitator of cock-crowing" goes as far back in Russian history as Suvorov, their greatest eighteenth-century General, who used to arouse his camp with it at dawn, standing outside his tent in a night-shirt.)

Crew of the Molotov 'plane.—The impression produced by the crew of the aircraft which ferried M. Molotov to a British aerodrome is still discussed in R.A.F. circles. On landing, the crew, of whom there seemed to have been an enormous number even for a four-engined bomber, refused to approach the Mess, but got down to several hours' intensive work on their craft, refuelling it, re-oiling it, stripping its machine-guns and putting them together again, and, in general, making the whole outfit gleam like a new pin. Then they entered the Mess, joined in a bit of a party, challenged our boys and visitors from a neighbouring station to a singing-competition, then rested—and then took off again, leaving behind them a very considerable reputation for airmanlike qualities and for good will.

(The rumour has since spread that they showed their aircraft to nobody, and were excessively "cagey" in this respect. It is true that they took rigid precautions that no unauthorised person should get anywhere near it—but a high British Air Officer was taken all over it.)

Security-mindedness.—One day a little red fox ran across the middle of our Murmansk aerodrome, and a Russian sentry upped with his rifle and shot it dead at a range of 200 yards. This induced a little serious thinking on our part. The "security" regulations of our camp were extreme—as no doubt they had rightly to be, seeing that we were only about 15 miles behind the Front Line, and that Line a fluctuating and lightly-held one—in some places no more than a string of outposts on each side. (This meant, of course, that enemy agents had a fair chance of slipping over at any time.) All our officers had to wear revolvers about the camp at all

times—this, partly because of proximity to the Front Line; partly because anyone in officer's uniform without a revolver would automatically have been under suspicion as an enemy agent or an escaping prisoner. No one was allowed outside the camp without a "*propusk*," a countersigned identity card with his photograph and the regional Soviet stamp on it. All airmen proceeding down to the aerodrome in the dusk or the dawn were advised to march there together in ordered bodies rather than go down as single stragglers. Single stragglers, either in the dusk or dawn, might have been regarded as "suspect." These elaborate precautions brought home to us something of the vigilance habitual to a country with invaders actually *on its own soil*. All along the 1,500 mile front there are a thousand Soviet villages that have had the loathed Germans in their own "next village"—a situation hardly realisable by any Englishman.

In all the circumstances we could well believe that the Soviet sentries had been brought up in the tradition of "shooting first and enquiring afterwards" in the case of all doubtful personages near aerodromes. And in view of the fate of the little red fox (a snap shot at 200-yards range, if you please!) we thought it better to take no chances.

Of Soviet Pilots.—Of their inexhaustible vitality and temerity. Of a Soviet pilot who insisted on doing his first Hurricane-solo in what amounted to a snow-blizzard; taking off, being lost to sight (as we thought for ever), coming round and making his landing, going off and round again. . . . Our own fighter-boys, who themselves liked flying very much indeed, said, "These Russian boys do surely like flying!"—and they meant it as the highest of compliments.

Of their methods of testing their guns—getting into the cockpit and putting a twelve-gun burst into the hillside on the other side of the aerodrome. (The disadvantages of this method were explained to them—it meant replacing the

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gun-patches and recleaning the guns. They took note of this, and resolved to abide by the advice. Then one of their pilots got into a fight and found that his guns had *not* been loaded—so he reverted to his original method. . . .)

Of a pilot to whom we taught the game of darts—and who threw his darts with the force of a harpoon, sending them halfway through the dartboard. . . .

If these instances seem to show a wildness and recklessness of approach to all things, it must not be forgotten that the group of pilots in question were also, for the most part, pilots with many hundreds, and even thousands, of hours' air-experience; that they could be steadiness itself in the air; that Soviet Russia has a great tradition of long-distance flying, opening up Eastern Siberia by air-routes, and so forth; and was among the pioneers of the most scientifically conditioned of all flying—Polar flying.

Arts.—Of a long list of awards announced only the other day by the Central Government “for many years’ outstanding achievements in the sphere of artistic endeavour”; to, among others, Nemirovich-Danchenko (septuagenarian operatic and theatrical director—Stanislavsky had the highest Government recognition long ago); to Kachalov and Moskvín, two actors of genius; and to Madame Olga Knipper-Chekhova, Chekhov’s widow. A host of further awards greeted the younger generation of playwrights, singers, directors, actors and dancers. And all this with a life-and-death war on, and the “Fatherland” more than a little in danger. . . .

Stalin’s Face.—A quick close-up out of the film “*The Defeat of the Germans in front of Moscow*,” taken at the moment of his uttering the words, “If the enemy does not surrender he must be destroyed.” Long ago an American visitor—not a Communist—who had an interview with Stalin, described it as being a noble face. It is certainly one of extraordinary strength. But what impressed me

most was the quietness of its owner's manner as revealed in the close-up, swaying his body, by lifting a little his weight from foot to foot, as though not quite inured to microphone technique, and "muttering" the words rather than declaiming them—a reassuring, warming; and, beyond everything, "human" contrast, to the raucous and raving utterance of his little cheapjack opponent.

(It may be hitting below the belt—or maybe below the toothbrush moustache—to say so; but it has always amazed me that more comment has not been made before now on the sheer sub-human *ugliness* of Hitler. It is not a matter of the ideologies or the doctrines that he preaches—nor any recent fancy of mine. I do sincerely believe that if he were given to preaching a mixture of Christ and Lao-Tse, I would still find that countenance mean and ignoble to the point of bestiality. I was an art-student before I ever became a writer, and am therefore much influenced by external form. For more than the last ten years it has been a standing miracle to me, not that the German people have stood a decade of Hitler's oratory, but that in the very beginning they stood ten minutes of his face. I utter a serious suggestion towards the partial regeneration of Germany: That, when the great *débâcle* comes, and the name Hitler becomes as much execrated as it is now be-godded, the Germans are compelled, under Clause 1 of the Peace Treaty, to *keep* the portrait of Hitler hanging prominently in the family circle for at least a generation—and are, moreover, forbidden to throw eggs at it.)

Of the map of Stalingrad.—Glance at the map of that city—it is still worth a glance—as, from the safety of England, one glanced at it anxiously day by day during the siege. By each and every known rule of war it is not only a city difficult to defend, but flatly *indefensible*.

It is a long straggling city, stretching in a crescent north and south. *Behind* it—i.e., cutting off the defenders

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from their supplies—is a river about two miles wide. The attackers, the Germans coming from the West, had admirable railways—those from the north-west, the west, and the south-west. The railway lay-out alone explains why the Germans were so desperately anxious to capture it, and the



Russians so desperately anxious to defend it. Knowing the Russians, one knew that the city would only fall over sheaves of their dead bodies. And yet it seemed inconceivable that it should not fall. And yet it did NOT fall.

The defence of that city by the Russians will not rank among the classic defences of all time, but as *THE* classic

defence of all time. Ask anyone who can read a road-railway-river map, and he will agree.

I am not denying the Germans' military valour in saying that their subsequent defence of the city did not come into the same category. The lay-out of rivers and railways cannot be changed overnight. The Russians, attacking from the East, still had the same two-mile-wide river across which to bring their reinforcements and supplies. The Germans, right up to the moment of final encirclement, still had the railways to help them in the defence. They were out-fought, out-generalled—and surrendered.

Stalin in Moscow.—Stalin stayed in Moscow during the days when it seemed at least even-chances that Moscow would fall, just as Winston Churchill stayed in London during the 1940 blitzes. These things are not forgotten in the long memories of nations. I may be wrong, but I believe that Stalin set the seal on his enthusiastically-accepted leadership of the Soviet people by his staying put, in Moscow, at a time when Government offices, Foreign Embassies, the Government itself, had been evacuated 800 miles eastward to Kuibishev.

November Celebrations, 1941.—In the north of North Russia. Autumn, 1941. Russia had been almost five months at war. The first German onrush was only just beginning to be halted, and large-scale counter-attacks had hardly begun. The Russians had been pushed back over an area so big that it is not easy for an English reader to visualise. Leningrad was encircled and besieged. It was touch-and-go whether Moscow itself would fall. The Russians admitted that they had already lost something near two million casualties (a stupendous admission for a nation, however big, in the first few months of war), quite apart from the forty million or so Soviet citizens who had fallen under Hitler's domination.

And yet . . . the "November Celebrations"—the three-

day "*Quatorze-Juillet*," the *Fête Nationale* of the Revolution, was celebrated as though the citizens were still enthusiastically pleased with the fruits of their Revolution. I had often seen the Celebrations in peacetime years in Moscow or in Leningrad. Always there were tremendous military displays of marching infantry and cavalry, with tanks and guns on the move, and the sky overhead black with aircraft. And always it had been remembered that the occasion was a "celebration," as well as a military parade; there had been three evenings of gala performances of opera and ballet and drama, of music and dancing, in the theatres.

It was interesting, in the small northern villages in that first winter of the Russian-German war, to see how the same celebrations had gone over to wartime conditions. There were no longer massed parades of infantry and cavalry, of tanks and guns. The infantry and the cavalry, the tanks and the guns, were by now in front-line action. So, instead of a local parade, the local training battalions and the local populace were all assembled in the local village halls and cinemas, and the local Commanders, Kommissars or Colonels, addressed them on the war situation. The long series of speakers did not pull their punches. The situation of the front line was explained in detail, and the almost desperate positions of Leningrad and Moscow were not glossed over. Casualties to date were given in figures. "The Germans say that we have lost between three and four million. That is not true. But we have lost nearly two million." The immediate job of the citizenry there present was then touched upon: to stay put; to go on with their work; to practise themselves in the use of arms; to fight when attacked—and if necessary to die fighting.

Then—and this was almost the most impressive of all, remembering the situation of the Line, and the fact that the audiences were only about fifteen miles behind it—it

had not been forgotten that the occasion was one of rejoicing as well as preparation; and an evening of entertainment was carried through—local talent putting on sketches and songs and dances, a Red Navy contingent contributing acrobatic turns and juggling turns and choral singing, with more dancing and more choral singing finishing off the show—the whole given and received with as much whole-hearted enthusiasm as though the enemy had been the other side of the moon, and not the other side of Murmansk Sound.

I thought to myself, remembering all the circumstances: "This is an example of as high-tempered a *morale* as could be found anywhere on earth." So supremely and triumphantly confident did the whole community seem in ultimate victory that I had the impression that, had any one of them got up and breathed a doubt of it—he would not have been put up against a wall and shot as a traitor—he would merely have been laughed at as a lunatic. Their confidence in themselves, their equipment, their leaders, and their cause, was absolute.

One Soviet Pilot.—An incident that took place just before we left the country. It was an exploit performed by a little Russian pilot known to us personally—he had been to some of our parties—and members of the Wing were able to check up on details, and to visit the pilot in hospital, before we came away.

The pilot had been flying on the Line, and had got into a fight with a couple of German aircraft. He had shot the first down, but had shot all his ammunition away in so doing. He had then taken on the remaining German aircraft, had gone for it, and had rammed it. (This is a technique much theorised about in Soviet circles, is frequently practised—and is occasionally successful.) Our friend had got away with it, and had baled out—and had landed, quite by chance, near to the damaged Hun two-seater aircraft that he had rammed.

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His immediate reaction, apparently, had been to resume on the ground the extermination combat he had started so auspiciously in the air. (None of the contestants, it can be imagined, had the faintest idea on which side of the Line they had fallen. The three of them, the single Russian and the two Germans, faced each other there across the frozen wastes, in a part of the land so desolate that, as has been mentioned before, the bomber crew could walk for days and nights without seeing a soul.)

The Soviet pilot had shot the first of his opponents with his revolver, and then shot the Boxer dog that the German crew, for some unknown reason, had brought with them. He then had to grapple hand-to-hand with the remaining German; he had had his own face slashed open from the forehead down to the chin, and had had some of his teeth knocked out. He had then finally destroyed his last opponent by firing his Verey-pistol into him from point-blank range—and had half blown the German's head off.

Then he walked back four days and nights in the snow, with frost-bitten feet and with his face hanging open, and had retired to hospital—where, among others, the M.O. of our Wing went down to see him. . . .

This story, in its toughness and determination—its ruthlessness, if you like—did seem to us to represent something near the heroic—and also to be representative of much else that we had seen of the spirit in which Soviet Russia is fighting the war.

It represented something of the passion and agony of an entire land that, over thousands of square miles of its country, has experienced all-embracing war, to an extent that only a few square miles of England (the tragic centres of its blitzed cities) has yet experienced war.

It represented the passion of a people who are collectively in the war to an extent that whole large sections of our English community—in parts of England's lovely untouched

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cities and lovely untouched countryside—would still find it almost impossible to credit, so far away is it from their own experience—and outside their imagination.

The Russians are in the war “to the death”—and it will be the death of their enemies.

* * *

They are fighting like this, civilians and military together (for the line between the two is a very loosely-drawn one; in besieged Stalingrad the workers in the tank factories took time off to drive their repaired tanks straight into action, by way of a half-holiday)—they are fighting like this because they have a Faith. They think they’ve “got something” . . . And that that something is worth defence.

What that something is, is not easily explained by an Englishman in a couple of words. But it seems to me that one of their young playwrights, Afinogenov, put at least a suggestion of it into his play “*Distant Point*.” (I translated it several years before the present war; it has had several productions in London, and has been done more than once recently by the B.B.C. The young author, with all his brilliant promise, was killed in one of the Moscow blitzes of 1941.)

Distant Point is the name of a small station on the far-Eastern reaches of the Trans-Siberian Railway—“Vladivostock—2,000 km.; Moscow—8,000 km.” on its station board—right away in the wilderness.

In one of its scenes an oldish man gets up and begins to make a speech. He says: “In the olden days” (meaning the Tsarist days) “I was a pointsman and signaller on this railway. . . . Now, I’m still a pointsman and signaller on the same railway. . . . But——”

And an opponent of his, who is having a furious argument with him and trying to get him worked up to steam-heat, says jeeringly: “Well, what’s the difference?—What’s the difference?”

And the older man, after thinking a moment, says slowly : "Now . . . the line and the signals and the railway—and the whole country as far as its far boundaries—belongs to *me*; and I am part of it. *That's* the difference . . ."

In that last sentence is to be found at least a hint of what countless millions of modern Russians feel about their relationship to their country—it "belongs to them," with all its powers and potentialities.

It did not need the present war to teach the Russians patriotism. It seems the inalienable instinct of many nations and races to feel patriotism, however little their country does for them and however little they own of it; it is coming more and more to be realised how far the suicidal sacrifices of the Russian infantry in the badly-led advances of 1914 saved the British and French armies in France : and Borodino, in 1812, thanks to the Russian infantryman, was the first battle in which the armies personally led by Napoleon lost nearly as many men as their opponents—the first clash that heralded the beginning of his end—the prelude to his *Götterdämmerung*.

But it is not proving a distraction to the Russians that the country they are prepared to die for seems to them a country passionately worth living for. "If necessary, we, too, must pass through death," says the General in "*Distant Point*." But he doesn't pretend that he wants to die. And, for the modern young Russian, life, given peace, can be a passionate explosion of energy not only in the service of, but in the enjoyment of, a country that belongs freehold to him.

It is in this faith—of the country belonging to them—that Russians have laboured in their last twenty-five years of very hard, and on the whole unrewarded, work. For, starting where they did, the whole of the work of the generation has had (in general) to be given over to such things

as "heavy industries," the mines and foundries, the canals and the factories, to building Dnieprostroy dams and Magnitogorsk cities—and *not* into giving themselves a good time in the way of clothes and consumers' goods—radios, cars and gramophones. From time to time the régime was able to let-up a bit. Wages were raised, prices were lowered. A sudden burst of comparative prosperity and ease would seem to have come over the country, and cosmetics and more pretty dresses would gladden the girl toilers and students—who had at least kept fairly physically fit at all times. But the outcrop of semi-luxury would not be for long. The outward show of Soviet prosperity was rigidly conditioned by the war-horizon—and the war barometer has never for any considerable time together in the last 25 years been set fair.

But the Soviet Russian people have accepted the bet. They have felt they "owned the country." They have regarded themselves as putting the fruits of their labour "back into stock." The luxuries and trimmings could come later. Their children would own them. All would ultimately be well.

It is in this same Faith—the Faith that they "own the country"—that they are fighting the present war—to the admiration of the entire world.

And it is in this same Faith that more millions of them than we now care to think of, are already dead.

* * *

Two short pronouncements, one by a Russian, one by an Englishman, can close this short sketch of Russia at War—extraordinarily incomplete as it is, setting out to give no more than a few scattered glimpses (all that one man can do)—but hoping that general truth to the spirit of Russia has not been missed.

One quotation is from the Russian journalist and author,

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Ilya Ehrenburg, one of the comparatively few war-propagandists of all nations whose eloquence and authority are outstanding enough to have real pulling-power beyond the confines of his own country. The author of *The Fall of Paris* knows Western Europe as well as he knows Russia, and has wide standards of comparison.

I quote the last phrases of an article which he wrote some months ago, in November, 1942, just before the falling-due of the "November Celebrations," the same annual fête that we had helped to celebrate on Russian soil a year earlier. Ehrenburg was writing about the 25th of the series, marking the quarter-century.

He ends: "We have not yet known victory, but we are ripe for it. That which was proclaimed in Petrograd twenty-five years ago was proved in the defence of Moscow last winter, is being proved in the spiritual strength of the defenders of Stalingrad now." (He was writing during the intensest strain on that city.)

"This anniversary will be spent in the trenches, fighting. We will celebrate later, when we have won."

"But we know now that we have not lived these twenty-five years in vain. We have become a people that *cannot* be defeated. 1917 has been tested in the fires of 1942, and Russia has passed that test."

Thus speaks Russia, abundantly sure of itself. It is just worth recalling that in the previous winter, when the outlook was far blacker, their self-confidence was equally high-handed and triumphant.

Let the Englishman to speak be His Majesty the King, the head of all Britain's fighting forces.

The King, at the opening of Parliament, again several months ago:—

"I share to the full the admiration of my people for the glorious feats of arms of the Soviet Forces. In the defence of Stalingrad, which was a hard blow struck at our enemies,

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a new chapter of heroism has been written in the annals of war."

I hope it is not impertinent to suggest that in saying this the King, not for the first time, voiced the feelings of countless thousands of his subjects.

CHAPTER III

QUESTIONS ON RUSSIA

RELIGION.—In any discussion of Soviet Russia the question of Religion crops up at one time or another, invariably. In the early years of the Revolution the acknowledged Godlessness of the State and the alleged persecution of Religion were used in other countries as one of the heaviest sticks for belabouring the U.S.S.R. I quote the words of a Church of England clergyman in reference to Press attacks of that time: "Where religion was concerned there was no limit to the false witness. So priests were massacred in their thousands—in newspaper offices; and bishops were killed, not once but several times, before eventually arriving in Paris.

"Many people have really believed that it is a crime in the Soviet Union to attend the churches or possess an ikon, and that all the churches were closed by law anyhow. The fact that such statements have been so widely believed bears witness to a long campaign of slander."

Briefly : It is an article of the Constitution of the U.S.S.R. that any person or group of people are at complete liberty to worship in any way they so please. All State education is completely secular. No Church or denomination is supported by the State—all Churches are "disestablished,"

in the same sense that all denominations in England except the Church of England are disestablished—i.e., the congregations have to subscribe for the upkeep of their edifice and to pay their priest. I am told that certain exceptions are now being made even to this rule—certain churches have been listed as historic or of artistic interest, and the State is maintaining the fabric of these out of State funds. All religious buildings are rent-free and tax-free.

In the last twelve years I have seen with my own eyes large congregations openly attending religious services in Moscow and Leningrad and the large towns—and in small Volga villages I have slipped into the church on a Sunday and have seen the priest in his traditional long beard and gorgeous raiment openly conducting a service, openly attended by the villagers. I made a mental note at the time that the congregation *on the whole* seemed to consist of middle-aged and elderly people—but this applies to certain English congregations also.

What the early Soviet Governments did have a very determined drive against, was the power, wealth and position of the Russian Church as inherited from Tsarist days. The Government claimed that the old Tsarist Church was quite remarkably corrupt :—the influence exercised in it and over it by Rasputin—and the fact that at one time he was nominating his own thugs to important Church offices, and getting them consecrated and appointed, may be taken as evidence of fairly widespread corruption. (It is also part of the record, of course, that many high Russian churchmen put forward vigorous protests against Rasputin influence. Also it is worthy of note that in 1906, 61 bishops out of a panel of 63 voted for disestablishment and reform, which did not take place.)

The Soviet Government also claimed that the Church was in many cases trading on the most backward superstitions of an ignorant peasantry. This is confirmed by anyone

who knew Russia well in Tsarist days. A brother-officer of mine, Flt./Lt. Hodson, who spent most of his youth there, is a mine of stories of his Russian nurse and other Russian nurses, who for all serious illnesses in families would produce little bottles of allegedly sacred oil, supposed at one time to have been poured over the bones of certain allegedly sacred skeletons in the great Lavra Monastery in Kiev. . . . These were bought by peasants at monopoly rates, and external application of a single drop of the oil was held to be most salutary. The monopoly of the sale of votive candles—and the monopoly of the sale of vodka in certain provinces—was also the property of some monasteries.

The Church of Tsarist days was phenomenally wealthy. It has been computed by Church historians that at the beginning of the Seventeenth Century the Church owned about a million serfs. It is a matter of fact that at the time of the Revolution the Church owned about 18,000,000 acres of land.

The Soviet Government also claim—and are borne out by many official histories written long before the Bolsheviks had even formed a Government, or, indeed, were even known—that the Tsarist Church was used largely as an instrument of government, and that the local village priest was far too often the spy and informer of the Government, and was occasionally even the *agent provocateur*. Father Gapon, who led masses of workers to slaughter in front of the Winter Palace in January, 1905 ("Red Sunday"), was very widely believed to have been in Government pay.

I repeat that all these criticisms, and other severe ones, are not "Bolshevik myths," but were on record long before the Soviet State came into existence—most of them are to be found in the standard Church histories; and it is for all these reasons that the early Soviet régime took steps to hit that Church hard, and drastically to curtail the

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established Church's powers and influence. But "religious persecution" is a different matter, and religious persecution does not exist in the Soviet State.

On the first night of Russia's war 12,000 people prayed for Soviet victory in and outside a cathedral in Moscow.

A recent number of *Life*, the American illustrated journal, devoted a large section to photographs of present religious manifestations in modern Russia—the high dignitaries of the various denominations, of the "Old Church," the "New Church," the Baptists, the Catholics, the Evangelicals, and so forth; their regalia, and their congregations.

"Anti-religious propaganda"—i.e., the advocacy of rationalist thought—is officially permitted, as it is in England and most other civilised countries. Government encouragement of it has appeared to be decidedly on the wane for a long time past.*

What exactly do the words "Bolshevik" and "Soviet" mean?—At some pre-1914 conference of the Social Democratic party a split on policy occurred. Lenin led the larger section, the "majority party," at that particular conference. The Russian adjective "Bolshoi" means big. (The "Bolshoi Theatre" of Moscow, so called since its building, a hundred years ago, simply means the "Great Theatre"—the Moscow Opera.) The word "Bolshevik," therefore, has no inherent affinity with be-whiskered toughs with snow on their boots, as we were led to imagine during the early years of the Revolution; it simply means the adherents to Lenin's majority party. The word "Menshe" means "less," or minority; and the outvoted party at the

* The still more recent re-establishment of the Holy Synod, an event happening after the above was written, seems to confirm what I have said. The event does not indicate that the Soviet Government itself is any more closely connected with religion; but it is important evidence of toleration.

conference kept the name of "Mensheviks," or minority party.

The Russian word "Soviet" means, quite flatly, "council"—neither more nor less. The Tsar had his own Imperial "Soviet," called by exactly the same word, the "*Gosudarstvenii Soviet*"—the "Council of State" or the "Council of Empire." A vast official painting of it, large enough to fill the wall of a ballroom, with Nicholas II in the midst of his Generals, Ministers and Ambassadors, still hangs in one of the Moscow galleries. The modern Soviet electoral system is one by which the village in council elects its representative to sit for them on the "council" of the district; the councils of the local districts elect each their representative to sit for them on the council of the province; from these in turn are elected representatives to form the councils of the various Federal Republics—and so on to the central All-Union Soviet. It is claimed as an advantage of this system that you can at least have a chance of knowing at first-hand your chosen representative to the immediately higher authority—the village "knows its man" (and, incidentally, can recall him at any time) to an extent that is difficult where a single member of a Central Parliament may represent a couple of hundred thousand constituents. There is nothing inherently undemocratic about it. In Soviet Russia the President of the local Soviet seems usually to get business done to the reasonable content of the community.

The immediate, and intelligent, English query to this is: "Does this bear the faintest relationship to Democracy as we understand it, seeing that there is still only one party, that of the Socialists, represented—and no other is tolerated?"

The answer must necessarily seem far-fetched, but still may be admitted to have a gleam of common possibility in it. In England, though Communism is allowed to be

preached and represented, Capitalism is the working rule of the land, and the main political parties engage in violent political dispute with one another as to how Capitalism should be worked. In Soviet Russia, Capitalism is *not* permitted to be preached or practised—any more than a movement could be started for the restoration of a Tsar; but though Socialism is the working rule, and the enforced rule of the land, there are a variety of opinions as to how that Socialism may best be carried out. The leading articles in the million-circulation Soviet newspapers (far more “centrally directed” than ours though they are) can be scathing in their criticism as to how this or that department of Government is functioning. The wall-newspapers of any factory may contain vigorous indictments of lines of factory policy, and suggestions for their revision. The practice of “Samo-Kritika,” “self-criticism” (or, in broader lines, the right of the Soviet violently to discuss its own achievements and shortcomings) is encouraged by authority.

In all this there is at least the germ of an idea of an ultimate Democracy as understood by us. The goal of “Democracy” is held on high—which is at least a change from the Nazi philosophy, which has written off Democracy and Freedom as “slave words”—and has taught its youth to go about the streets joyously shouting the slogans, “We spit on Freedom,” “We spit on Democracy.”

A straw that may show which way the wind is blowing was the procedure with the new 1936 Constitution. A *draft* (only) of this proposed Constitution was drawn up by the Central Government. It was then printed by the million copies, and was distributed broadcast throughout the land, for the discussion and amendment of local village and factory councils, for the space of something like a year. Amendments were received by the thousand, were duly discussed, and in many cases incorporated.

This is a straw only, and I am unable to say how many

points of the new Constitution have had to be suspended under the stresses of war—as other countries suspend points of their own Constitutions in the same case. But I suggest it as a guess that Russia, when strong again in national security, is likely to become more liberal and democratic than autocratic—and that, remembering it has never yet possessed our own centuries-old tradition of free speech and free discussion, considerable advances have already been made. Stalin declared, “The new Constitution is to be the most democratic of all Constitutions.” Stalin does not usually choose his words for the sheer beauty of their cadence, and it may be taken that when he says a thing it represents a deep and considered tendency in Russia.

“The Finnish War. How account for the poor showing of the Russian Armies in it? Why did they go to unprovoked war with Finland anyway?”—To take the second question first: Through the upshot of previous wars, Finland possessed a small chunk of territory that extended to within about 15 miles of Russia’s second greatest city, Leningrad. A glance at the map will confirm this. The threat to certain of her vital factories and communications if Finland ever for a moment were to be dominated by a hostile power was exactly as great as though, for us, Germany were to have access to a piece of territory 15 miles (siege-gun shelling range) from Manchester. Russia had good reason to fear that Finland might be dominated (and occupied) by Germany, as she had been by Germany in the last war.

Russia tried to avoid going to war with Finland over this small bit of territory, comparatively useless to Finland except as a military threat, but vital to Russia (glance at the map again); and offered to buy the bit of territory from her, and to indemnify her by giving her a much larger piece of territory up north. (See the diplomatic records for this.) Apart from the fact of having offered to buy the bit of

territory, which was about as morally useful to Finland as the catapult of a schoolboy threatening the windows of a house, Russia had no morally defensible reason for going to war with Finland.

However—she went; and the fact that Leningrad was able to withstand the first two winters of siege, *by the Germans*, is the result of it.

Russia's bad showing in the Finnish War?—The alleged “bad showing” was—at least to a minor extent—the result of emotional press-reporting; we were anti-Russian at the time; Goliath was brutally assaulting David; Goliath was the unpopular member of the pair. Hence play was made in press-reports with the “miserable Russian equipment,” etc. It may have been just as bad as it was said to be—and yet it seems a little difficult to believe that Russia could totally re-equip an army of millions in the space of a few months—and not so many months later, when I landed in Russia, most of the Russian Army equipment, especially winter-equipment, was superb. Again, our press-reports made frequent reference to the “mass-slaughters of Russians.” And yet on these same days when mass-slaughters were reported, one could glance at the barer official communiqués of both sides, and read, “Here the Russians attacked with a Brigade.” A brigade, in any Army, is one of the components of a division—is round about two or three thousand men! i.e., it was fairly obvious to the dispassionate, that the Russians were pulling their punches—that in attacking the Mannerheim Line with a “brigade” at a time, they may have been laying themselves open to slaughter, but not to “mass-slaughter” as it is understood in modern battles and in unprejudiced correspondents’ despatches.

The probability remains (as I believe, though I have no “inside” knowledge of this whatever) that Russia did make a desperately bad political miscalculation at the outset of the

war. Information had led them to expect that a large section of Finnish opinion would be favourable to them; that they could expect something of a walk-over—and I even have it on hearsay that they advanced to some of the early attacks preceded by bands and banners. Whether or not this last is true, the history of the campaign seems to show that they met with a very considerable surprise; that they then withdrew, reorganised, and brought up far larger forces—and went through the scientifically-planned “Mannerheim Line”—with something like military credit.

They thereupon made peace, claiming only exactly the territory that they had offered to buy or lease at the beginning; neither invading Finland further nor occupying Finland—and, in fact, leaving Finland so free that Finland could, and did very shortly afterwards, under German ægis, re-declare war on them.

I believe this, very roughly, to have been the truth about the Finnish campaign, though the complete and authentic details of it will obviously not be at hand until after the end of the present war. I do not personally believe the whole affair to have been a vast bluff put up to fox the German General Staff. I suppose it is not inconceivable that it may have been so—but the theory seems to be so unlikely as to be almost grotesque.

“*Can one get divorced in Soviet Russia simply by going round the corner to the local Registry Office?*”—I believe not. At a certain period in the early days of the régime, the procedure was made almost as simple as this. Provided that the upkeep of the children was paid for—and the Government took care that such moneys were deducted “at source” from the parents’ income—the State professed itself not much interested in conventional morality; though it is worth remembering that Lenin had been an advocate of discipline in family life—“‘Free Love’!—that is a very old

and "bourgeois" conception. We must evolve something much better than *that!*"; and a very dim view, to use a Service expression, was always taken in official circles of young Party-members who went in for any form of excess.

I have been told, by those who lived in Russia during the early days of the régime, that one curious effect of the ease of divorce-laws, was that it tended to make husband and wife rather *more* polite and considerate with one another :—after all, if one's life-partner could go off and divorce one for an ill-considered word or a casual box-on-the-ears, one was more careful to ration oneself in the matter of ill-considered words and casual boxes-on-the-ear. And I have heard it claimed by Soviet authorities that even at the maximum period of laxness, they had at least got rid of the swamp of perjury, legal delay, sordidness, and expense, that still offends many high-minded English people in our English Divorce Laws.

In any case, I believe that the whole procedure has been considerably tightened up. As in many other fields in Soviet Russia, a wild experiment has been tried out; a certain amount of experience and enlightenment may have been gained from it—and the normal average requirements of the common man been reverted to again.

A parallel may be found in Soviet educational methods. At one time it was thought a good idea to start inculcating "co-operative" methods early in Soviet school-children by asking them to solve their arithmetic problems not as "individuals" but as small syndicates (the group was to do the sum collectively). As might possibly have been foreseen, the technique usually resulted in the bright child of the syndicate doing the sum, while the rest of his colleagues played marbles. A return was later made to the procedure by which each child was set to do the sum individually. . . . Oh, the Russians; oh! the Russians!—you *cannot* say that a people that thinks up such crazy ideas, and yet retains its

basic sanity and saving sense of humour, is not a lovable people.

Family Life—Still Existent?—Certainly so. The biggest and most lasting result of the early Soviet fad that children were too much influenced and dominated by parental authority was the establishment of a nation-wide system of factory and town and village crèches. When any early enthusiasm that there may have been for disrupting the family had died down, the crèches remained—and multiplied. It is now a very widespread procedure for the wives of working Russians to park their young children in a crèche or kindergarten-school in the morning, knowing that they will be admirably looked after and fed (and entertained or instructed according to age), while Mother goes off to do a job of work on her own (for its own change of occupation, its contribution to the national effort, and its contribution to the family wages), knowing that she can collect the children in an equally good state of preservation in the evening.

The advantages as set out above are threefold (change for the mother—more cash—and care of the child); the most important of them probably being, in the case of a nation that in its village life has often far to go towards modernity, that the children are taught hygiene and the use of tooth-brushes and spotless personal cleanliness, and the good-tempered collaboration which is in the truest sense good manners. I have seen crèches in quite small and poor villages where the small children were treated and educated as Mayfair would be content to see its own small children treated and educated.

A fourth, and not unimportant advantage, is that in most cases the system allows the mother to return to her home-life in the evening a good deal better-tempered than if she had a couple of shrieking children on her own unaided hands all day. It is possible that the crèche is far more a

cementing influence in family life than it is disruptive.

England has had increasingly to adopt the crèche system in view of war-emergencies. The same advantages apply—the children are well looked after; the national output of work is increased; and the individual family budget is increased. But it also seems to me improbable that it will be immediately abandoned as soon as peace comes. Far too many young working mothers will still be too glad of the release from the hell of exhaustion that can, in certain circumstances, be the 24-hours-a-day, seven-days-a-week, care of a young child or flock of young children in a small dwelling-place. For the poor, the asphalt playground of the tenement-block has had to do duty for the crèche. The rich have evolved the segregated nursery with its highly-paid staff. But in neither case up till now has this been called the “break-up of family life.”

“Is Russia, which pays its factory workers so much a month, and its factory managers many times more a month, returning to Capitalism?”—Of all certain things in an uncertain world, I regard it as most certain that Russia will not return to Capitalism, nor have I ever seen any signs of it. There is nothing against Socialism in paying a certain State scale of wages to a bench-worker, and a certain higher (even much higher) State scale of wages to the factory-director. Socialism means, in exactly the words of the old slogan, the national (i.e., un-private) ownership of the means of production, distribution and exchange. In other words again, the abolition of the private profit motive, which is the essence of capitalism. In other words yet again, the forbidding of any one man to “exploit” another man by paying him a private wage, and making a private profit on the work he does. If a man does outstanding work on his own ability, either as a factory-director, or as a writer (good show! say all writers) or a technician, there is nothing on earth against

Socialism in allowing him to be outstandingly rewarded by the State for the work of his individual brain.

The death-penalty has been largely abolished in Russia, as in some other European countries, for what we know as the normal run of crime. If a man goes so far as to murder his mother-in-law, I believe that he is liable to no more than ten years or so imprisonment. But if by any conceivable stretch of ingenuity he were found to have held up the war-effort, or the national effort, for motives of his own private profit—and this would be exceedingly difficult in modern Russia, I believe quite seriously that he might be liable to be shot as having committed one of the major acts of treason against the State. Piece-work, and sharply graduated scales of State salary for different grades of workers, right up to the highest, are the rule of the day. But the profit-motive is non-existent; and far too much good work has been done without the profit-motive for such profit-motive ever to be re-introduced.

“But What About Communism”? “With piece-work and graduated salaries, where does Communism come in, then?”—The answer is that it doesn’t! It did—at the very beginning—and only for a very short time, but it was found in the circumstances of the time to be unworkable. Then Lenin introduced his “New Economic Policy” (which fulfilled its immediate function in the very limited time allotted to it); then an increasing form of Socialism was introduced which has carried the Russian State to where it is. Communism is frankly held out as a distant goal only—to be achieved perhaps generations hence—when means of production have been so completely mastered that every man *can* have exactly what he wants from the abundance of goods achieved—and Government itself can become no more than a central clearing-house for regulating exchange.

It is perhaps worth remembering that the official title of

our Russian Ally is "U.S.S.R."—the "Union of Soviet Socialist Republics"—not yet "Communist" Republics.

"But with graduated salaries, grades of 'black-coated workers,' etc., aren't class divisions growing up and being perpetuated?"—Growing up, maybe; being perpetuated, no!

It is in the common nature of man to seek his own immediate affinities—where engineering projects are being discussed, other engineers foregather to discuss them; playwrights and journalists and painters get together in places where they can talk about art. It would, inevitably, be quite possible to draw loose temporary lines of divisions of "interest" in Soviet society, where workers are consorting, and scientists are consorting, and those interested in professional football are consorting, and those interested in town-planning are consorting. And it is also true that those high up in professions demanding brilliant brains are living in more comfortable flats than those who are average or less-than-average producers in the ranks of unskilled labour.

But the strongest possible measure is taken against any hereditary perpetuation of this—and that measure is Education, available, and up to the limit of the recipient's capacity for taking it. The son of a highly-paid industrial director may be no more than average intelligent; he will therefore get education up to a certain standard—say up to the age of seventeen or so—and then will have to take the job open to his capacity. He will get a job as a mechanic of some sort. The fact that his father is well-off will not be enough to buy him a university education. The son of the lowliest benchworker, if he happens to be a more than average bright boy, will be pushed through to the highest university standard (*with* living allowance to enable him to take advantage of his scholarships), and will have his full chance of becoming a scientist or surgeon or research-

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specialist, as his talents fit him. *He will become one of the intellectual aristocracy of the land.*

(Sub-question:—"Is it worth the while of a brilliant father to make a good position for himself if he has no chance of bequeathing exceptional advantages to his son?")

Answer:—Is it not rather his confession of failure as a father if he funks letting his son go out into the world taking his chances in open competition with the son of a labourer? if he has to say to himself, "My son must have special coaching before he can keep his end up?")

There will always be an aristocracy in any land. In one land, Russia, it takes the form of a contemporary aristocracy of the talents.

"The Profit Motive:—If it is abolished in modern Russia, what, if anything, has been found to put in its place? What 'incentive,' if any, remains to make people get on with their work?" (On the lines of Voltaire's dictum, "If God did not exist, would it not be necessary to invent Him?")

This question has been asked me scores of times. There is something in the contemporary English temperament—or training—which seems to make it impossible, for those who have not thought about it, to grasp that there may be any other general mainspring in life but the profit-motive. I have been asked it by scores of people whose general mentality was absolutely insufficient to lift them out of the ranks of minor salaried classes (and very often the very small salaried classes indeed); and I have been asked it by a boy who was going nightly on raids over Germany as a sergeant air-gunner. It does seriously seem as if whole groups of people, whose range of achievement will always be limited by a few pounds a week on 'an office-stool (in someone else's employ), would defend to the death the right

of any stray millionaire-capitalist, a Lord Motormex or what you will, to make a fortune out of them.

The answer to the sergeant air-gunner could be simple :—
 “You are going over Germany nightly for the sake of your sergeant’s stripes and for the sake of an ideal (though you wouldn’t call it that)—you refuse to let other people have the highest danger unless you yourself have a part of it. Neither your sergeant’s rank, nor your ideal, nor your sportsmanship—which is the same as refusing to let other people have unshared danger—bring you in a penny of “profit.” If you get a “gong”—which is R.A.F. jargon for a D.F.M. or some other decoration—you don’t immediately apply to the Government to raise your sergeant’s pay—nor bargain with the Government that if you go on doing operational raids you get an extra rake-off out of the kitty. You are merely pleased with your “gong.” In other words, you work on the “honour-motive”—which is quite a different one from the “profit-motive.”

The “honour-motive” has been very highly developed in modern Russia. There are “Heroes of the Soviet Union,” and wearers of the “Order of Lenin” and the “Red Banner” among industrial-organisers and simple workers and scientists and planners. If any operative at a factory bench shows exceptional attention to his job, or devises a means of speeding-up production, or organises his immediate group into a higher state of efficiency—he is liable to be picked out by authority as having “deserved well of the State” (in classic Roman diction), and to be greeted with bands and banners, and to be awarded a Decoration. He has “given” something to his country, of the same kind, though not in the same degree, as an operational air-gunner in performing a military feat. (Stakhanov, a Soviet citizen who evolved a comparatively simple system of rationalising coal-getting at the coal-face, was made into a national figure overnight.)

"Honour" is one of the most powerful of all human incentives, as our air-gunner—and as all air-crews, naval officers and ratings, and the whole of the Armed Forces of the Crown (under their initial bashfulness)—would probably recognise, if it were put to them.

But still there would be others who wouldn't.

Can one put it to them like this, in a parable? :—There is a certain country in Europe (not Russia) where *all* the most highly esteemed professions and avocations are served entirely without the profit-motive, and on almost nothing but the incentive of honour.

In this country (call it "X") the Prime Minister himself gets nothing for all his treaties and his alliances and all his direction of the policy of state, but a state-salary which makes him a poor man compared with many titled shop-keepers; and the same with all his Cabinet Ministers. (And yet the offices of the Prime Minister and of Cabinet Ministers are looked up to.)

In the same country, the heads of the most esteemed and aristocratic professions, the Army, the Navy, the Air Force, and all their officers and troops, serve without the shadow of a farthing of profit-motive. (Or, if they do, they are given the sack immediately. Years ago, it was whispered in the parliament of the land that a certain General, connected with the work of Army Contracts, owned shares in a certain steel company on the other side of the world. His resignation was announced the same day of the whisper.)

In the same country, the staffs of its Foreign Office, and its Diplomatic Service, its Treasury and its Higher Civil Service also serve without the profit-motive, but work for a State scale of pay and the possibility of an Honour or Decoration late in life. The Diplomatic Service in particular is commonly held in such high esteem that cadets of noble houses pay their own money to have some sort of connection with it. And it costs the father of an honorary

Attaché quite a bit in upkeep for his son as honorary Attaché to an Embassy abroad.

In the same country, the supreme heads of the medical profession—thought by some to be a shark's profession—the physicians and surgeons who have European fame, spend anything up to three-quarters of their time doing absolutely unpaid work for the great Hospitals of their Capital. And a research-specialist who discovered a cure for a disease would no more demean himself by holding his cure up to purchase, and defiling his doctor's oath, than he would by forging a cheque.

This country, this happy country, is, as need hardly be mentioned, our own England.

Work it out. Our Prime Minister and his Cabinet Ministers get no "profits" from their labours, which, especially in wartime, give them grindingly severe hours of labour—but get a State-salary which leaves them beggars when compared with a millionaire-industrialist.

The Chief of the Air Staff gets no more "profits" from planning successful bomb-raids on Germany than do the air-crews who carry them out; or Generals Montgomery and Alexander for land-victories; or Boards of Admiralty and Sea-Admirals for victories at sea.

These chiefs, and those who carry out their orders, get no profits, but only State-salaries, and in the case of the combatant ranks, pretty low State-salaries. They work with the prospect of no "dividends" ahead of them, but only the chances of wounds or death—and an occasional "gong." In other words, the "honour-motive."

The most celebrated physicians and surgeons, the established heads of the whole "sharks" profession, are honoured to be on the permanent "*unpaid*" staffs of the great hospitals up and down the country. They may take it out of their rich private patients who see virtue in Harley-Street addresses, and, by implication, demand a Harley-

Street scale of living (and capacity to pay Harley-Street rents) in their medical advisors. But the best of these spend more than half their time in hospitals where they do not make a brass farthing. A physician who discovered a cure for a disease and attempted to "patent" it, would be struck off the Register. Suggars, one of the pioneers of radiology, died the other day after half a lifetime of self-induced cancer . . . and without even a public decoration to his name.

I hope I have said enough, by reference to the Cabinet and the Foreign Office, the Services and Medicine—without mentioning the Church and Scholarship, and half a dozen other of the most esteemed professions—to convince enquirers that the best of England does not need to go to Soviet Russia for lessons in what can be done with the profit-motive eliminated. It would not be a paradox to say that the very finest and most humanely beneficial work in England and Russia and all other countries in the world, is, and has always been, done without the shadow of a hope of profit. But it is paradoxical to find how many people in England seem seriously aghast at the idea that without the profit-motive anything would ever get done at all. . . .

As regards "initiative" and "incentive," in modern Russia all the posts I have touched on, Cabinet-membership and membership of the High Command of the Armed Services, the professions, and the organising-directorates of industry—the High Command of National Planning—are open to anyone with the ability to qualify for them. In other words, anyone who runs his own small show with outstanding efficiency may be put in to manage a factory, then a group of factories, then to direct a national industry, with all the power and prestige and responsibility that such positions imply. Is that not enough to be at least a minor "incentive" to an ambitious youth? Or does he want the right to a millionaire's rake-off as well?

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"Are Soviet battle-claims, victory-statistics, figures of enemy aircraft shot down, etc., exaggerated?"—I don't know. I have no authority, or inside information, either confirming or denying. I do know, however, that at a certain period, Soviet Authorities expressed a polite wish that our own newspapers would print Russian communiqués direct as given out by Russian G.H.Q., and without adding embellishments by our own sub-editors. An example :—It was often our practice, when the Russians had issued a communiqué saying that "so-many fortified points and so-many inhabited villages had been occupied"—to headline this for English consumption as "Russians Start Pincer-Movement round So-and-so." The Russian request implied that if any particular "Pincer-Movement" was in progress, they themselves would know all about it, and would pass it on—i.e., that they believed, in principle, in understatement rather than haphazard claims liable to be refuted. A further matter I have noted from the study of their own communiqués :—When they first mention a town or place by name, it is usually after they have taken that town or place. In all the weeks of fighting that led up to the capture of Veliki Luki their communiqués were soberly monotonous in their reiteration of un-named "strong points" and "inhabited villages" captured. The first time that Veliki Luki appeared by name in their own communiqués was when they had captured it—and were well beyond it. These instances seem to show that the Russian General Staff have a basic belief in the virtues of accuracy.

"What about 'Political Commissars' with the Services?"—Agreed that this was a most anomalous status for any British member of the Services to grasp : in each Battalion (or Air Force Station, or Ship) a figure who was both under the command of the Commanding Officer, and

yet not under his command—for the Political Commissar had the right of reporting directly and independently to Higher Authority—a power-behind-the-throne with more than a vengeance! To our way of thinking this would represent the negation of all discipline. And yet it did not work out quite like that, as I learnt after long enquiry on the subject.

To put it into conceivably English terms, the Political Commissar was a sort of super Education Officer, responsible for the morale, the welfare, the loyalty, and the political consciousness of the troops—political consciousness in the sense that they were kept abreast of current affairs, and in full knowledge of what they were fighting for—leaving the Commanding Officer free to concentrate on immediate tactics, and the problems of handling his battalion in action. The Political Commissar, furthermore, could sometimes, through his powers of reporting “direct,” be a very considerable help, rather than a hindrance, to his Commanding Officer. If, for instance, the Commanding Officer had a plan for his battalion, and found it being held up by any such thing as inertia, or red tape, or the holding-up of supplies from on high, his Political Commissar, by being able to crack off a signal direct to on high (or highest), might materially assist the schemes of his Colonel.

Such, I gathered on many hands, was the function and design-for-living of the Political Commissar.

When they went (they were abolished in 1942), they went for two reasons: (a) the loyalty—the devotion itself—of the Army had been proved beyond all question, even in the days of the heaviest initial reverses and retreats; (b) often the Political Commissars had identified themselves so completely with their battalions and units, showing exemplary conduct in the trenches, organising and leading attacks, and getting personally decorated for military valour—that many of them, on recall, were simply given

short officers' refresher-courses, and posted as executive officers straight back to their original units. Incidentally, they still retain some of their political functions (though not the power of reporting direct); and the appointment of Shtsherbakov, an official very high in the councils of the Government, to the rank of Lieutenant-General, would seem to show that the political education of the Army is by no means being neglected.

"What about the Jews in Soviet Russia?"—Maurice Hindus, to whom I owe much knowledge of life, once offered me the following wide generalisation, *à propos* the Jewish question: "There are two things that tend to hold a 'class' together—either extreme advantages shared in common, or extreme disadvantages shared in common. Take the case, in the widest sense, of any Capitalist upper-classes. Without splitting hairs too much, it may be admitted, for purposes of argument, that they share certain advantages. In so far as they share advantages, this has tended to make them cliquey. Take, at the other end of the scale, the case of the Jews. In almost all countries, dating back for centuries, they have tended to share important disadvantages—persecutions and pogroms, and the denial of the right to own land. These in their turn have tended to make *them* excessively cliquey. They have stuck together; and in most countries have remained a class 'forced in upon itself,' isolated, exclusive, and on the defensive for purposes of mutual protection—in exact proportion to how far they were rigorously, or lightly, persecuted."

This seemed to me one of the few wide generalisations that made sense, and could be borne out by experience. Even in pre-Nazi Poland, for instance, where there was considerable anti-Jewish feeling, there were Ghettos in Warsaw and Cracow—not technical ghettos, in the sense that residence in them was enforced, but defined quarters of

the cities in which residence had become 100 per cent. Jewish (I have been through both these ghettos in pre-war years). In Britain, on the other hand, where anti-Semitism had become an almost forgotten perversion, Jewry is tending to disintegrate as a "race," and remains chiefly a religion which certain British citizens may choose to follow.

In Soviet Russia, all racial discrimination has been removed in principle, and abolished *in practice*. There is no "Jewish position"—for it is the same as everyone else's! Nobody bothers any longer even to ask if a man is a Jew or not. He is a Soviet citizen, with *exactly* equal rights and duties. . . .

The result—foreshadowed by Hindus, who is a far keener student of these matters than I am : Soviet Russia is the one country in the world where Jewry, as a racial fact, is probably in process of disintegrating. I had the luck some years ago to go touring round the mud-roads of the Crimea with Maurice Hindus, in a rickety automobile, visiting scores of farming communities there, many of them Jewish. The Jews in that part of the world seemed to have taken up their station quite simply, as brawny and militant and self-reliant farmers—and to be self-differentiated from their Tartar, Cossack, and Central-Russian neighbours not by a hair's-breadth.

It may be the suicide of Jewry—or its solution. (Incidentally, the theory that Jews are predominant in the Soviet higher oligarchy is incorrect.)

• "How does the ordinary Soviet Citizen live?"—A wide question; only to be met with a wide answer. He lives like us—though with all the reservations that I have already made as to his inheritance of a far poorer standard of life than ours. He does work, and he draws wages proportionate to that work. If we are generalising—and generalising about nearly two hundred million citizens, a proportion of

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whom were nomad tribes up to a generation ago—his standard of living is in still many ways lower than ours. Assuming you have followed the pieces of history scattered about this book, you will see approximately why this is. He has advanced his position out of all recognition in the last generation. He may advance it again out of all recognition in the next. Further than that I will not go. Study the implications. But don't imagine that the gramophone record of a swing-tune, or the private automobile, is yet as easily available in U.S.S.R. as it is in Park Lane or Park Avenue, or in the suburbs of a small town in America's Middle-West. Soviet wages buy more in some respects (rent in important particular*), less in others (luxury goods) than in England. But they remain wages, and they are at the disposal of the earner.

“What about the ‘Purges’ of the Soviet General Staff (and others) round about the years 1937-1939?—No inside information. It was certainly more than a little puzzling, not to say shocking, to Soviet well-wishers of the time. Many of our less well-intentioned authorities went so far as to hint that the Soviet régime had killed off at one fell swoop all of its competent Generals. (It now appears that they missed out a few—no doubt owing to pure absent-mindedness!) On the other hand, it now looks just possible, judging in the light of after-events, that the purges were less drastic than was at first supposed; and that where they did fall, they fell on a potential Fifth-Column—before, as it were, it had either time to become “Fifth” or a “Column.” But I speak without inside information about all of this.

“What about the trial of the Metro-Vickers Engineers still earlier?”—Again I have no inside information. If any-

* Even allowing for overcrowding in certain cities, the “proportion of income” that the Soviet citizen is allowed to pay for rent is a bare fraction of what the lower and middle-class Englishman pays.

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one is still deeply interested, the best thing he can do is to get (or borrow from a library) the complete three-volume authoritative verbatim report of that trial, rushed into print and into translation by the Soviet authorities. The authenticity of the transcript is beyond question. Its day-to-day detail of question-and-answer, examination and cross-examination of witnesses, etc., makes in the last degree unlikely the idea, widely current at the time, that our own men were beaten up between sessions of the Court, or were doped into making confessions. (The particular brand of dope used was a theme for certain newspapers at the time.) The long preliminary private investigations that precede all Russian trials are judicial practice in many other European countries, France amongst them.

The facts remain :—that Russia was “nervy” at the time in matters of suspected sabotage; that our men got off with expulsion from the country (after what as independent a witness as the American Ambassador declares to have been a reasonable and open-Court trial), and without physical intimidation. One of our engineers was “openly applauded” after a certain vigorous defence. The most authoritative of the group has already been back, working in liaison with Soviet Russia.

“Does Culture still continue in U.S.S.R.?”

“Five Hundred Theatres open their Autumn Season”—headline in an official Soviet newspaper, dated September last, during the historic moments of the defence of Stalingrad. A theatre “opening a season” in Russia means a theatre with a permanent policy (i.e., repertory), and permanent means of support. It will run from early autumn to late spring—about nine months in the year. The plays scheduled on this occasion, in the midst of a life-and-death war, included all the Russian classics, and innumerable productions of Shakespeare; opera; light opera; comedy;

musical-comedy ; music-hall and burlesque, both native and derived from all conceivable European sources.

The "Theatre," if in this term are included opera and ballet, is the most spontaneously popular of all the arts in Russia. Literature (where a first printing of a new book can still sell out 100,000 copies in its first week), and other arts, are not neglected.

"*Will we go back to a state of veiled antagonism to U.S.S.R. after the War?*"—It is up to the populace of both countries ! The British populace has the vote. And is far more likely in future years to judge for itself on the basis of proved facts—than to swallow at a gulp (hook, line and sinker) much of the punk pushed out by its large-circulation Press in the last twenty years.

"*If there has been misrepresentation of Soviet Russia in England for the last twenty years—has there been no misrepresentation of England in Soviet Russia during the same time?*"—A perfectly fair question ! Not the least doubt but that there has been a certain amount of misrepresentation. And yet, travelling very widely in Russia during the years of our greatest press-onslaught on that country, I found that countless individual Russians were interested (in the friendliest and least biased spirit) in England and all things English, and I have reason to believe that the general line of Soviet propaganda to its own citizens was, "If a certain section of the British Press is virulently hostile to us, remember that this only represents a certain (and limited) line of British opinion. In other words, that Britain in general bears us no ill will." There was, even before the outbreak of the present war, a vast body of opinion in each country that was prepared to be cordially friendly.

"*Why has the bulk of the British Press been so hostile to Soviet Russia?*"

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For many reasons. For so many reasons that it would have been remarkable if a considerable section of the Press had *not* had at least an early bias against Soviet Russia.

(a) In the "Wars of Intervention" it is reasonably certain that both the White-Russian armies, and some sections of the young—and then undisciplined and desperate—Red armies, committed atrocities—i.e., the Russians were "barbarians." (b) The murder of the Tsar and his family. England in the seventeenth century, and France in the eighteenth century, had both murdered their Kings. But Ekatarinburg was barbarism carried forward to the twentieth century. (c) The strict limitation of the power of the ex-Tsarist Church to interfere with politics, i.e., "the persecution of Religion"—was one more stick with which to beat the Bolsheviki—i.e., they were Anti-God. (d) The suspicion among all large-scale capitalists the world over that if large-scale Socialism were a permanent success—could really, if only in one vast country, "deliver the goods," then this was a threat to the very foundations of capitalism. (e) The chagrin of a minority—even a very small minority—who owned shares in Tsarist railways, industries, goldfields, etc., and who were surprised that a Revolutionary government made trouble about taking over, at par, all the debts of its predecessor.

The last body may have been small—far too small to exercise much influence, and too concerned with their own boodle to tread any ideological ground. But groups (a), (b), (c) and (d) were certainly on ideological ground. On the whole, it is just conceivable that the Press of our country might have been worse than it was. . . .

"Future Anglo-Soviet Relationship, Soviet World-Relationships? Does Soviet Russia wish to Communise the World?"—The answer is, as I see it, No! We must beware of being ten to fifteen years out of date in our knowledge

of Soviet Russia in general—as we were in our knowledge of Soviet Russian engineering.*

The Russian Revolution was founded under Lenin in the belief that it was economically impossible to have Socialism in one country alone—that the thing, literally, could not stand by itself; that world-revolution was a necessity for the preservation of the Russian Revolution. Latterly—only about fifteen years ago—there arose a new personality, one Stalin. Since his day the flatly contradictory slogan has gone out, “*Socialism in one country—the U.S.S.R.!*” (Hence, among other things, the violent opposition of the Bolshevik “Old Guard” towards him.)

It matters not in the least if this has been paid out to foreign and surrounding countries; it matters a very great deal that this has been banged into the heads of the growing young generation in Soviet Russia—as it has. In every kindergarten, in every school, on the walls of railway stations, it is possible to see a huge relief-map of Russia-in-Europe and Russia-in-Asia (Siberia), stretching for yards, with arrows indicating “Here we have gold—iron—coal—copper—aluminium,” and so forth. The legends and teachings that go out from on high are all in the same strain. “We own one-sixth of the earth’s surface! We need no more territorial possessions! What we have—it will take us decades, or even generations, to develop. And *that* is to be our task! If, after generations of work, we have made our country the most advanced and prosperous country, the nearest-to-perfect country—then, if other countries care to come in with us, that’s all right by us. But frankly, we are not very interested either way. ‘Russia for the Russians’—now—and for generations to come.”

* The above, and the whole of the following passage, was written many weeks before the announcement of the dissolution of the Third International, and in complete ignorance of it. I was trading on my observation of trends throughout years.

I believe this to have been the attitude of Soviet Russia for a long time past; and I believe it to have been a sincere attitude, because the younger generation has been brought up in it. It would have been lunacy for a Government to educate its children in one theory if it, itself, believed another.

I believe, by the same token, that our ideas of "Bolshevik infiltration," still very widely felt, are in the most abject way discredited, they are out of date. . . .*

"Why did the Russians go into Eastern Poland—stab Poland in the back?"

In the first place, to prevent Hitler getting Eastern Poland and so having a jumping-off ground a few hundred miles nearer the heart of their own country, Moscow, when the war (which they knew to be inevitable) began. On all the laws of human chances, Moscow would have fallen—and more than Moscow—if they had not done so.

There may also have been a Soviet theory that certain districts in Eastern Poland were pre-eminently Russian rather than Polish—that Russia was, in a sense, rescuing some of its own nationals from Hitler. If this was right or wrong, I do not know. What the precise claims are on either side I do not know. If anyone has inside information on this, he knows a lot more than I do.

"Future Soviet-Polish relations?"—On the lap of the gods!—and commonsense and good will. It is worth remembering, in order to get the smallest understanding of this thorny question, that Poland *inherits* a vast burden of mistrust and hatred towards all things Russian—acquired during generations, and acquired, in the beginning, during Tsarist days.

* In other words, the dissolution of the Comintern seems to me not a sudden move of Wily Joe made for expediency, but the culmination of a long-maturing policy.

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The treatment of Poland at the hands of Tsarist Russia was unspeakable. The efforts of Allied diplomats in the early years of the last war, when Russian unity was important to the Allied cause, were frantically directed to persuading the Tsarist Government to give some sort of reasonable treatment, or even limited autonomy, to Poland—but always without success.

The Russian system of government in Poland, for generations, had been coercion tempered with pogroms. Polish culture, and the Polish language itself, were slighted. Read the Polish childhood of Madame Curie. A minor but illuminating instance: when the boy Nijinsky first went to St. Petersburg to get his training as a dancer at the Imperial School, he was mocked and ostracised as being a poor youth, speaking Russian with a Polish accent; on one occasion his Russian fellow-students thought that it would be funny to bet him that he couldn't jump over a chair—then pulled the carpet away that he was to jump on to, with the result that he broke his leg, and might easily have broken his neck. This was thought to be a reasonably fair way of treating Poles. . . .

The feeling of many Poles towards Russia in general is almost pathological in its hatred—and in view of all the circumstances of the preceding centuries, it would be almost surprising if it were not. The outside world—the non-Polish, non-Russian world—must remember this.

“What about Soviet Russian treatment of its own minorities?”—This is probably one of the biggest contributions made by Soviet thought to the world-philosophy of Government. Very early in the days of Soviet power the old Tsarist policy of “Russification”—to use their official word—the policy of suppression as far as possible of national languages, culture and local government—the policy of rigid centralisation, that left such loathing by the Finns and the

Poles—was reversed. It was realised that it would be impossible for each of its many scores of minority nationalities (sometimes hardly more than nomad tribes) to have its own Foreign Office and economic policy—its unfettered right of erecting tariff barriers, and declaring war on its neighbours or on the United States. A form of centralisation—Federation—had to be retained. But within the bounds of this Federation (which kept political and economic control) freedom of local government, local language, local customs and local culture, was not only permitted but encouraged from on high.

(An exception was made in the case of definitely retrograde local customs. I have had a scene in a backward territory amusingly described to me by an eye-witness, where an intensely politically-conscious young Communist virgin of sixteen found that she was liable to be sold by auction to the local pasha by her parents; and the protest-meeting organised by the local Young Communist League on the occasion.)

But, in general, local self-government, and especially the tradition of national culture, have been urgently fostered. An Ukrainian National Theatre and an Ukrainian National Ballet have been set up in Kief—and invited to perform in Moscow. The theatrical troupes from half a hundred outlying nationalities meet and compete for prizes in All-Union Festivals in Moscow. Even in the cases of tribes so primitive as hardly to possess a national “written” language, expert philologists have been sent down by Moscow to analyse and record and codify the spoken language, so that its cultural heritage, however insignificant, shall not be lost.

The result of all this, undertaken as official and considered policy, is that the U.S.S.R.—perhaps the wildest agglomeration of nationalities on the face of the globe—has come into the war as a united *and contented* nation. . . .

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Economic and material advantages have not been missed. Life is less dirty than it used to be in Southern Turkistan. Railways and kindergartens, crèches and theatres have grown up simultaneously. "Wealth"—in the essential sense of more goods to buy and more money to buy 'em with—has increased.

"The Russians are fighting magnificently. We all agree. There is no discussion about that! But—they only fought, when their own country was attacked, to defend themselves. They didn't lift a finger to help US in our hour of supreme need."—A question of the first importance, very widely asked. It is often put in the form of, *"What about the German-Soviet Pact of 1939?"*—the date-line of the War?" I was in Vichy (France) the night that that Pact was announced. The rain was sluicing down the summer streets of Vichy as though from a cloud-burst. Despair seemed to hang in the air. I knew, then, that with the conclusion of that Pact, it was only a question of hours before Germany invaded Poland, and that World War No. 2 would begin. The time (to those who had enough background-knowledge to know what was really happening) was a nightmare. I have no personal reasons for minimising the implications of that Pact and its week-later consequences.

And yet—to keep common sanity—one needs to know a little of recent history to be able to see the causes of the Pact.

To go back to recent history—that is a key to understanding of all Russian present-day happenings: in the first years of the truce between the World-Wars (1918-1939) Soviet Russia wanted, of all things, Peace and Disarmament. Soviet Russia was the first to propose universal disarmament. It was desperately hoped-for by Soviet Russia. Russians, showing one round their schools, hospitals, crèches, clinics, would always be the first to remind one that

Soviet Russia had still to consider herself as living under something like war-conditions—that she was spending 50 per cent. of her entire national income on armaments and building up a future army, in case the powers of the West reconciled their own differences and combined to make a final onslaught on her. Only those who remember the threats breathed out in those days by Western-European politicians can claim to say that Russia was not largely justified in her suspicions—and the Five-Power Wars of Intervention waged against the new Republic had at least given her solid ground for these doubts.

The time changes to a few years later. The idea (or ideal) of general European disarmament is seen to be as dead as a doornail. It is seen to be so by Soviet Russia herself, whose politicians have always been essentially realistic. *Thereafter, and for the next ten years, the whole effort of Soviet policy in Europe has been thrown into the attempt to get going a fighting league—a military alliance—against any “aggressor nation”—the “aggressor nation,” by that time, having pretty generally come to be understood as being the Central-European Powers, the Axis, under Hitler.*

In this particular respect the diplomatic record of Soviet Russia has been clear-cut and irreproachable.

Various difficulties were advanced at Geneva, the centre of all these discussions, by an assembly of world-powers who could never quite get it out of their heads that Russia might be intending to play some dirty trick on them. At one of the sessions—this is all in the records of the period—the objection was advanced that “in modern warfare it was impossible to define who was ‘the aggressor’”—that modern methods rendered such facile generalisations inoperative and impractical. Monsieur Litvinov thereupon got up and said to the Assembly of the Nations something that amounted to this: “If you want to hear a definition of aggression, I can give it to you with exactitude! In

modern warfare, as in ancient warfare, an "aggressor nation" is one which has its troops across the borders of another nation's territory—or alternatively, since we are being modern, its aircraft over their skies. . . ."

Consternation ensued on the part of the assembled nations in Geneva! The League had never heard anything so simple, straightforward, common-sense and logically unanswerable, in all its life. It naturally enough demanded notice of the question (whatever the original question had been), and in due course, talked the whole matter into abeyance in a cloud of verbiage. . . . Among a long list of items for legal expenditure that a friend of mine once got from his solicitors, was a simple item:—"To telephone-call *à propos* So-and-so, and deciding to do nothing, 8s. 6d." Nothing was thereupon well and truly done. But it remains a fact, as witnessed by all diplomatic records, that right up to early in 1939, Russia had showed willingness to throw in its armed might with any other Power that would march with it—with Britain, France, Czecho-Slovakia, Poland—*against* any breaker of the peace—i.e., it was willing to help tear into any aggressor as soon as the aggressor manifested himself—and to tear into him with its full force of infantry and tanks, aircraft and guns.

The tragic chapter of Chamberlain's Military Mission to Moscow in the midsummer of 1939 is also on the records. In ordinary and practical working diplomatic procedure, a "Pact" is entered into between nations for a certain specified purpose; *then* a Military Mission is sent, to carry out Staff Talks for the implementing of the Pact. The Military Mission to Moscow in the summer of 1939 omitted to be preceded with a Pact. It had nothing whatever to talk about (except certain Baltic boundary questions, which were matters for High Diplomacy, and not for working Generals, anyhow—and had been the subject of disputes for months already).

Our Military Mission, in short, not at all through its own fault, but through the trifling (if essential) matter of the omission of the Pact, were in the position of stooges—and the Russian General Staff, in being expected to receive them, were placed in the position of stooges also.

It was then, and then only, that the Soviet Government at last saw that they had nothing in the way of serious treatment or collaboration to hope for from the Chamberlain Government—and it was then, and then only, that they brazenly “did a Munich” with the Nazi Government—in order to get one more year to strengthen further their defences for a war that they saw inevitably coming.

I believe that this brief and necessarily telescoped version of diplomatic history corresponds rigidly with the facts.

The Russians are realists, and had read *Mein Kampf*; they knew that Hitler, in his way a realist, had decreed that Germany must expand to the East; and they knew that no hope of ultimate peace for Russia could begin until Hitler and his lunatic dreams were done away with. The Soviet-German Pact was a piece of temporisation—most uncomfortable for us—but essential for Russia’s self-preservation at that time—a blind, a bluff, an expedient—but not a permanency.

But up to the period of signing it, their record was clear. They might, given different treatment, have marched with us a couple of years earlier than they did. Their whole record before that had tended to show that they would march with any country, or group of countries, against the Aggressor—would, in fact, throw in their whole might against the disturber of the peace, and asked to do nothing better.

In the light of this, it is not quite justified to say, as so many people in England have:—“*The Russians are fighting magnificently. But, after all, they are only fighting to*

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save themselves! They would have come to the aid of no one."

On their record—and records are important—they would have come to the aid of anyone who looked Hitler in the face, and who proposed to give that face a slap.

"Russian sense of humour—does it bear the faintest relationship to ours?"—There need be no important misgivings about this. A sense of humour is important in the life of nations. I have seen British and Soviet pilots getting on like a house-afire together, each thinking that the other side was crazy, but each side enjoying each other's jokes. I have seen *The Cherry Orchard* played to vast popular audiences at the Old Vic. (and enjoyed by vast popular audiences) to a point where it was the popular money-making play of the Old Vic season, and replaced our own Shakespeare on his own stage. I have seen *The Pickwick Papers* represented on the stage of the Moscow Arts Theatre, probably the pre-eminent theatre of Europe—and the representation has been the smash-hit of the Moscow Season. It is only very unserious people who will think such instances unserious. Britons and Russians enjoy each other's jokes.

"Are Russians duly grateful for the material help (supplies, aircraft, tanks, guns, etc.) sent them by Britain and America?"—It would be nonsense to pretend that Russia is as impressed with any material help, however large, that has already been sent, as they would have been with an invasion of the Continent, had it been possible, and had it been carried out, any time in the last year. They are, however, proportionately grateful of the value of the supplies, all of which have been thrown immediately into the front line of combat or support.

There has been a recent minor American rumpus over the

allegation that they were not acknowledging these supplies sufficiently publicly; and it is true that the Americans had small luck in finding out where these supplies were going. Subsequent to this allegation, Monsieur Maisky decorated British captains and merchant-seamen with high Soviet awards for their gallant work in bringing these supplies through the Murmansk route. But all these awards had been made, had been publicly announced, and stressed in the Press of both countries, as long ago as last September—i.e., long before any Allied fuss had been made about the matter.

“What about future Post-war trade-relations with Russia?”—Long ago—as many as eight years ago—I was talking with a high Soviet trade-official in Moscow, meeting him as a private guest at a dinner-party in a private house, and talking (as regards myself) with only an amateur’s knowledge of the subject. I asked this same question about future trade-relationship with U.S.S.R.

He said, also completely off-the-record—meaning that it was not spoken officially—and therefore may have been meant the more sincerely—“The U.S.S.R. and Britain are *natural complementary* countries. There is still so much in the way of raw material that the U.S.S.R. can supply to Britain—there is still so much in the way of high-precision engineering goods, machine-tools, etc., that Britain, with her long and brilliant tradition in such things, can supply to Russia. . . . The trade between the two countries might well be almost unlimited.”

This was years ago—spoken in the conditions of the peace of 1935. It might still be true of the conditions of the peace of 194—.

“What about the G.P.U.?—is there still some sort of powerful Secret Police in modern Russia?”—The G.P.U.—

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or whatever modern name it may call itself—is still a powerful force in the land, amounting to a vast public service, as well as a police-force. It looks after, among other things, the lost-luggage of travellers and the booking of their tickets, as well as scrutinising their credentials; and as long ago as twelve years, a minor official came up to me on a Volga steamboat, showed me his G.P.U. insignia, and revealed to me in conversation that his main job at that moment was to see that too many apples were not stolen and eaten out of the many crates of fruit consigned to the boat!

The G.P.U., in short, is an enormous Department of State, corresponding in many respects to our own Home Office and ordinary, non-secret, Constabulary. A certain specialised grade of it looks after internal security.

I would ask English readers to remember three things only in this connection :—

(1) That Soviet Russia has always been a nation surrounded (or liable to be surrounded) by enemies based a few miles away, across land-borders only, from its territory.

(2) That Soviet Russia does not possess our centuries-old traditions of, and acclimatisation to, Free Speech, Representative Government, the Two-Party (or Multiple-Party) system of government—that some form of Secret Police supporting the Government is a yet inescapable inheritance and hang-over from the Tsarist Checka and similar institutions.

(3) And that if any British citizen imagines that the present security of his own country is altogether in the hands of a few uniformed Bobbies at street-corners, he is altogether making a big mistake. In times of war, England is far too intelligent not to defend itself, by veiled methods as well as overt methods, from enemies within its midst. Soviet Russia has been in a state of war since the day of its foundation.

Last and best question of all (the same that I thank a nameless A.C.2 for, uttered in an R.A.F. Camp many

months ago):—"What, if anything, have we to learn from Soviet Russia? What, if anything, has Soviet Russia to learn from us?"—It seems to me as possible—I will say no more than this—that we shall have to adapt from Soviet Russia one of the basic points of all their practice of government—"Production for Consumption"—"Production for Distribution"—call it what you will, so long as you mean that it is work done for the community's sake as opposed to work done for unrestricted Private Profit.

It rather looks as though we were already coming to see the point of this; as though—as the war intensifies—we are having to subordinate Private Profit in mines, shipping, steel, transport, etc., to the common good (to winning the war and beating the common enemy)—so we shall have to continue in some degree this control for the winning of the peace—the cleaning-up of the megalomaniac mess left by Hitler—the generations of despair and chaos that might be left by his Bedlamite plans and their failure.

If "Production for Private Profit" can clear them up—well and good! But it looks probable that Production for the Common Good will have to step in and help take control. Anything that can beat it, is welcome to. But what can?

The English will have to work out their *own* adaptation of the new formula.

"What Can Soviet Russia Learn from Us?"—The Bomber-boys and the Fighter-boys, the Navy (Royal and Merchant) and the Troops of our Eighth and First Armies, would be the first to admit that there is nothing the Russians can learn from us in one way—that there is an "absolute" quality of heroism that has been reached by both sides—as at the Maasterick bridges in June, 1940, in the Battle of Britain, in the Northern Convoys, in the far reaches of the Atlantic, in the record of a single pilot fifty times on night-

raids over Germany, in the defences of Leningrad and Moscow, Stalingrad, Sevastopol and Odessa. . . .

The fighters of Britain and Russia do not need teachings and learnings as between one and another. They each know their own business pretty well.

But if there are any main points on which the two great countries, politically, could more nearly come together, and in which Soviet Russia could learn from Britain, I believe that they are those of Freedom and Toleration. Our own record in these great things is not blameless—it is broken at times—but always, when it is, it is broken to the accompaniment of immense public outcry, protest and pandemonium; and on the whole ours is a record to be proud of.

I do not believe that there is anything in the ideas of Freedom and Toleration that is altogether startlingly new either to the Soviet Government or its Peoples. The ground has been prepared for longer than many people think.

Stalin declared, long ago, that the new Constitution of the U.S.S.R. was to be “the most democratic of all Constitutions.” And it has been remarked before that, among politicians, Mr. Stalin is least of all given to talking *in vacuo*. His words are chosen carefully, and represent policy either immediate or not so far distant.

Years before that, he made a speech, the celebrated “Dizzy with Success” pronouncement, in which he discussed the progress of the various Five-Year Plans. His speech was a homily on the theme of the over-riding importance of men over machinery. He said, in effect, that Soviet Russia had learnt to make machines brilliantly, but had tended to lose sight of the fact that mankind is the master of the machine, not its servant:—“*It is time to realise that of all the valuable capital the world possesses, the most valuable and most decisive is people, human beings.*”

He led up to his theme by an extraordinarily simple and homely instance, as is often his way. He described how in his youth, in some far-off district of Siberia as an exile, he had watched a group of a dozen peasants go off to rescue a horse that had fallen into a river; and how they returned later very pleased with themselves because of the success of their mission, and not at all put-out because one of them had lost his life in the process—had been drowned. A horse represented to them something valuable and important—a single peasant more or less was a matter of no object. Stalin, in middle-life, recalled his early shock at this.

The instance was interesting for two reasons. It was not a story against the “exploiting Capitalist class”—its point was the indifference to human life among the peasants as between one another. And it was Stalin, the so-called “ruthless dictator” of 180 million people, who publicly recalled the shock that it had made on his mind.

It has been emphasised in these short notes that the key to Russia’s contemporary history is to be found in Russia’s past history. It has been hitherto a country of vastness and ruthlessness. St. Petersburg was built, as late as the eighteenth century (the Augustan Age of English culture), quite literally on the corpses of a hundred thousand serfs. The site selected by Peter the Great, for strategic and maritime reasons, was an uninhabitable swamp, and in the process of draining it and making it habitable and building a city on it, a tenth-of-a-million slaves died.

No Ruler of Russia, trying to modernise Russia for the last two hundred years, has had an easy passage. Tsar Alexander II, a liberal Tsar, who abolished serfdom and prepared to establish a Constitution, was blown to pieces by Nihilists for his pains.

If one can personalise a country, it is not altogether fanciful to see Russia as having been for centuries past a soul in torment. One thinks of Checkov’s, the visionary’s, pro-

QUESTIONS ON RUSSIA

phesy in his last great play, *The Cherry Orchard* :—
“All Russia is our garden ! The earth is great and beautiful ; there are many beautiful places in it. . . . But only think, Anya ; your grandfather, your great-grandfather, and all your ancestors, were slave-owners, the owners of living souls. And from every cherry in the orchard, from every leaf, from every trunk, there are human creatures looking at you. Can't you hear their voices ? . . . Oh, it is awful—your orchard is a fearful thing ; and when in the evening or at night one walks about the orchard, the old bark on the trees glimmers dimly in the dusk, and the old cherry-trees seem to be dreaming of centuries gone by, and are tortured by fearful visions. . . . Yes, it is clear that to begin to live in the present we must first expiate our past, we must break with it—and we can expiate it only by suffering, by extraordinary, unceasing labour. . . .”

Thus Checkov :—diagnosing the condition and predicting the future of Russia, about the year 1890, with the clear eyes of a poet who, more than most poets, was interested in human beings.

The weight of history and destiny on Stalin's shoulders is an immense one.

It is interesting that this co-director, with Lenin, of the “extraordinary, unceasing labour” of a vast nation, also publicly acknowledges his sense of the over-riding importance of living souls.

1st May, 1943.

A FEW BOOKS

The following is a short list of books that may help to clear up the confusion in some people's minds about Soviet Russia. The list is not exhaustive. It would take the best part of a lifetime to read not merely all the "books" but even the intelligent and in one way or another enlightening books that have been written in the last twenty-five years about the Soviet experiment.

The few that I have mentioned are, with one important exception, reasonably accessible and cheap.

"An Ambassador's Memoirs," by MAURICE PALÉOLOGUE. (3 vols.) Probably unobtainable except through a library, but it is worth making the effort. The volumes form the fascinating day-to-day diary (1914-1917) of the last French Ambassador to the Court of the last Tsar—a revealing glimpse of the régime that precipitated the Revolution. The Ambassador was probably not always quite so sapient and prescient as he appears in these pages, but if there are traces of subtle retouches, who cares? He had a deep knowledge of Russian history, and an immense—if cynical—appetite for Russian contemporary life. He was quite capable of leaving a personal conclave with the Tsar or an Opposition Leader—and spending the rest of the evening in the salon of a St. Petersburg princess—and then drifting home to his Embassy to record in his diary what the ladies thought about it all. An Imperial Ukaze of 1916 will remind him of an Imperial Ukaze of Ivan the Terrible in the sixteenth century. It is a mirror of history—under a gauze of significant gossip.

Of all single books that throw light on the Russian Revolution, I would choose Paléologue's. Get it—by stealth or by treachery if need be! My own three volumes have all been stolen by so-called friends.

"Russia," by SIR BERNARD PARES. (Penguin Books, 9d.) The summary of the conclusions of a wise and life-long student.

"Russia: our Ally," by JENNIE LEE. (Hurricane Books, 9d.) Short, intelligent; written by one who has had personal experience in the country; written in the first days of the Russian-German war.

"The Truth about Soviet Russia," by SYDNEY AND BEATRICE

WEBB. (Longmans Green & Co., 2s. 6d.) The "Truth" in this title might seem excessively arrogant—one remembers Pilate's damping, "What is truth?"—except that it happens to be a summary and condensation of all the conclusions reached by the Webbs in their monumental and standard work, "*Soviet Communism: A New Civilisation*." The child is wittier than its parent—the summary makes gay and almost epigrammatic reading—and is profoundly worth everyone's half-crown.

"*Red Bread*"; "*Humanity Uprooted*"; "*Russia Fights On*"—and any other book by MAURICE HINDUS—but remember the date when each was written. Hindus, a Russian-born American writer, who "knows his stuff" to an unequalled degree, remarked to me years ago: "We writers about Russia have to go back to Russia and write almost a new book a year; the whole face of the country is changing so quickly: a book literally true to the year 1930 may be hopelessly out of date (except as history) to the year 1932 . . ." Therefore read "*Red Bread*," "*Humanity Uprooted*," etc., but remember that though they are brilliant expositions of the human and agrarian problem in the late 'twenties and early 'thirties, they are now history (and enlightening) rather than up-to-the-minute interpretations.

"*I Write as I Please*," by WALTER DURANTY. Of the several books by Duranty, brilliant ten-year resident correspondent of the New York Times, this book is probably the best summing-up of the deepest things that he has to say about Soviet Russia. His final philosophical chapter, recollected now by me at an interval of years, seems to be prophetic, and basically true to-day: the prophecy that, in Russia, the philosophy (under all the supervening obstructions), "What I have is yours—what you have is all of ours" will hold good. What Duranty wrote in the concluding sentences of this book has proved at least six years ahead of its time; it has been proved in the fires of Sevastopol and Stalingrad.

"*Life Under the Soviets*," by ALEXANDER WICKSTEAD. Already referred to in the text. Probably out of print. Borrow it if you can. Remember its date—coinciding with the first birth-pangs of modern Soviet Russia. A tiny and charming historic document.

"*Quiet Flows the Don*"; "*The Don Flows to the Sea*"; etc., by the Soviet author SHOLOHOV. Interesting and impressive. Again remember the dates—the agrarian revolution of the early 'thirties, impinging—I can think of no better word—on the Cossack communities of the Southern Don river.

"*40,000 Against the Arctic*," by Peter Smollett. By someone who has bothered to go and see for himself the North-Eastern development of Soviet Russia.

"*War and Peace*," by TOLSTOY. Comment unnecessary.

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Character changes—but also doesn't change. Those who best know modern Russia would be the first to admit how many characters (and characteristics) are still recognisable.

"*Atlas of the U.S.S.R.*" (Geographia, 3s. 6d.) An admirable atlas, giving indications of the lie of industries, railways, etc.

"*Russian Glory*," by PHILIP JORDAN. *News Chronicle* Special Correspondent Moscow-Kuibishev, summer-winter, 1941. Is a frankly "subjective" report—which is to say that it contains a lot of important matter about the wines that he drank at the "Kavkaz" in Moscow—and only stops short of telling us of the wines that he drank in other parts of the world on Mount Sinai with God—but does nevertheless contain some vital close-up, near-to-the-front-line, aspects of Russia at war. His conclusions are so near to my own—I see, in reading through my proofs, that I have often echoed him word for word—that I beg Mr. Jordan to believe that I have echoed him independently and unconsciously: that I had never read a line of what he had written until I came to add these notes to my present book.

"*Moscow, 1941*," by ALEXANDER WERTH. Important; by a man who "knows his stuff"; on the spot; and who knows Russian.

"*Distant Point*," by ALEXEI AFINOGENOV. (Pushkin Press, 2s.). A short 3-act Soviet play by a young Soviet author who was killed in the bombing of Moscow. I believe that it gives, in the super-civilised Chechovian formula of the old regime, one of the best indications of what modern Russia is fighting for.

"*Mother Russia*," by MAURICE HINDUS. The most recent of all, and one of the most valuable; a grand, dramatic, and *factual* piece of writing—qualities that do not always go together.

October, 1943.

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